Writing War

History in Occupied Japan, and its Echoes for Today

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'It is now a commonplace that a new Cold War has begun, brought upon the West by the aggressive partnership of Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin'.[1] Thus wrote the former senior State Department official Elliott Abrams in 2022. Though I don't share Abrams' interpretation of these new regional and global tensions, I do agree with his claim that the tensions are real and increasing. Their implications for East Asia, where the First Cold War never truly ended, are particularly profound, and a crucial task for scholars of the region today is surely to mobilise knowledge to resist the rise of the stereotypes, fear, and loathing that fuelled conflict during the First Cold War, and that risk fuelling conflict during the second.

Rising political tensions in East Asia are reflected not just in political rhetoric, but also in conflict over memory and history, and particularly over the history of the Asia-Pacific War. Increasing nationalism in all the countries of the region finds expression in rewritings of that history. In China, narratives of the war have shifted away from the classic Maoist formulation, whose emphasis on class struggle created space for ordinary Japanese people to be seen as victims of their own imperialist leaders (even though this did not necessarily prevent simplistic popular culture depictions of Japanese villains in war movies and novels). Particularly from the late 1990s, the Chinese authorities' emphasis on patriotism (rather than on class struggle) has been reflected in a widely disseminated vision of the Japanese (to quote Michael Yahuda) as 'the last and most cruel of the foreigners who had humiliated China over 100 years'.[2]

In Japan, meanwhile, the cautious moves towards apology and reconciliation which emerged in the early to mid-1990s have been replaced by the rise of an increasingly assertive new nationalist historiography, which at least since 2012 has been firmly backed up by the Japanese government through programs like its well-funded 'strategic overseas dissemination' (*senryakuteki taigai hasshin*) program. Of course, many outstanding Japanese historians continue to develop critical perspectives on Japan's early twentieth century colonial and military expansion, but they do this in an increasingly hostile environment.

In the decades since I started my career as an academic working on Japanese history, one of the most exciting and positive developments was the flourishing of intellectual connections between Japan and its Asian neighbours which took place from the late 1990s to the early 2010s, producing a wealth of formal and informal networks such as the Forum on Historical

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Consciousness and East Asian Peace (*'Rekishi Ninshiki to Higashi Ajia Heiwa' Fōramu*), initiated in 2002; the History Forum for Critique and Solidarity in East Asia (*Hihan to Rentai no tame no Higashi Ajia Rekishi Fōramu*), which existed from 2001 to 2006; and the Japan-China Intellectual Community (*Nitchū Chi no Kyōdōtai*), in which the late Mizoguchi Yūzō and Chinese historian of ideas Sun Ge played central roles. One sad result of the rise of political tensions in the region had been the retreat of this exciting momentum towards cross-border exchanges of ideas. Many of these groups have ceased to operate, and those that survive do so in increasingly difficult circumstances.

On the other side of the equation, over the past couple of decades, we have witnessed a new wave of historical revisionism, and a key focus of that revisionism has been the shaping of historiography in the post war occupation period (1945-1952). A central argument of contemporary right-wing revisionism in Japan (whose small hard core of advocates includes some Americans, Koreans and others, as well as Japanese nationals) is that the Japanese population was brainwashed by the occupation authorities—and particularly by the occupation's 'War Guilt Information Program'—into unjustified shame and guilt about Japan's wartime actions, and that it is now time to undo the effects of that brainwashing. To quote from one journalist-cum-academic, during the occupation period 'the Americans psychologically dismembered Japan' in a 'Stalin-like program of brainwashing. Japanese were taught to forget their history, and then to hate what little of their country they were still allowed to learn about.'[3]

The period from August 1945 to May 1952 is indeed crucial because it was the era when historians first struggled to give meaning to the disastrous events of the war which had ravaged East Asia during the previous decade or more. Moreover, the historiography that came out of that process has had a lasting effect on the way in which the war is remembered to the present day. Understanding occupation-era history writing, then, is crucial to understanding today's History Wars—and when I use the term 'History Wars', I am referring above all to those History Wars—the struggles over memory and truth—which are taking place *within Japan itself*.

It is also helpful to go back to the occupation period, I think, because—as is the case with many pivotal moments of history—we have a set of narratives and images embedded in our memories. It's easy to assume that we know this history already, and it's sometimes refreshing and helpful to go back and remind ourselves what people were *really* saying and writing at the time. It can be quite surprising.

Victors' History

History, as we all know, is written by the victors—at least in the short run. When the forces of the US and its allies arrived to take control of a war-devastated Japan in 1945, one of their main aims was to reshape not only Japan's future, but also its past. The two projects went hand-in-hand. 'Democratising Japan' involved trying to re-create Japanese citizens' understandings of their own history—a process which was to influence historical debate in Japan for decades, and still casts its shadow over today's 'History Wars'. But this reshaping was complicated and paradoxical.

Two of Japan's leading postwar intellectuals offered radically divergent impressions of the impact of the allied occupation on their nation's cultural and intellectual life. Historian Ienaga Saburō, who was in his early thirties at the end of the war, recalled his great joy that 'freedom of expression was guaranteed, in the first instance by decrees of the occupation army, and that as a result, research in Japanese history, which had suffered under particularly tight restrictions on freedom of expression, suddenly regained its vigour.'[4] Later, wrote Ienaga, he became aware of the occupation press code which 'forbade destructive criticism of occupation policies', but at the time he simply delighted in the opportunities to read works which had been banned before and during the war, and to debate ideas which would once have been proscribed as 'thought crimes'.

On the other hand, for literary critic Etō Jun, who was in his early teens in 1945, the defining feature of the allied occupation was its

draconian and stultifying suppression of free speech through a massive censorship program. Writing in the 1980s, Etō enumerated the long list of topics flagged as targets for censorship in the 'key logs' produced by the occupation forces. Among the items listed as targets for deletion, along with topics like 'militarist and nationalist propaganda', was discussion of the occupation forces' censorship policies themselves.[5] It was this last prohibition that Etō saw as particularly insidious—prewar and wartime censorship, he argued, had at least been overt and visible. But the occupation forces, by concealing their own censorship activities, created a 'web of taboos' in which Japanese people became permanently trapped.[6]

How can we make sense of these contradictory perspectives on the occupation? Censorship and state propaganda, of course, existed throughout Japan's modern history. The allied occupiers, who arrived on Japanese soil from 28 August 1945 onward, were deeply conscious of the military propaganda to which Japanese people had been exposed throughout the war, and almost certainly exaggerated its influence. Their own media had encouraged them to see the Japanese as 'mediaeval-minded moderns', reared for centuries in the 'fanatical tradition of feudal militarism'.[7] There was a widespread expectation that the occupation would face guerrilla resistance from the Japanese population, and when this failed to materialise, members of the occupation force were surprised, and sometimes suspicious.

Democracy and Censorship

It was against this background that MacArthur and his subordinates landed in Japan with an inherently contradictory set of instructions on what to do on their arrival. On the one hand, the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP) was instructed that existing censorship laws were to be abolished,[8] and freedom of thought was to be 'fostered by the dissemination of democratic ideals and principles through all available media of public information'.[9] On the other, the dissemination of militarism and ultra-nationalism was to be 'prohibited and completely suppressed', and Japanese people were to be 'made to realise that their suffering and defeat have been brought upon them by the lawless and irresponsible aggression of Japan, and that only when militarism has been eliminated from Japanese life and institutions will Japan be admitted to the family of nations'.[10]

One response to these instructions was the creation of a Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) under the umbrella of SCAPs Civil Intelligence Section. As John Dower vividly documents, this was originally intended to be a temporary measure to respond to possible resistance to the occupation from die-hard nationalists, but 'in practice, the censorship apparatus soon took on a life of its own'.[11] The CCD became a nationwide bureaucratic network employing thousands of censors. At the peak of the censorship regime, CCD staff were checking tens of thousands of newspapers and radio scripts and thousands of other printed materials, and in the later phases particularly they were also intercepting a large volume of private letters and telephone calls.[12]

In the early days, the main focus was on removing material which was seen as promoting Shinto mythology, martial values, or militarist ideology. This had a serious impact, not just on press reporting, but more particularly (perhaps) on popular culture such as samurai dramas and films. But in May 1946, the Civil Censorship Detachment was absorbed into a new consolidated Civil Intelligence Division under the control of the powerful Charles Willoughby (on whom more later), and later the same year Faubion Bowers, a fluent Japanese speaker, scholar of Japanese culture, and avid kabuki fan, was appointed to head the CCD.[13] Bowers made it one of his tasks to ensure that kabuki and other forms of traditional Japanese drama were not decimated by the occupation censors.

Stanley Kaizawa was one of the young second-generation Japanese Americans working in the theatre section of the Civil Censorship Detachment at the time, and he later recalled that his work was 'basically, to check all scripts to see if anything was critical of the occupation, and to check all scripts to see that feudalist

views were not propounded'. But, he added, 'ideas critical of the occupation were not really what concerned us. You know, the Japanese were very docile. We didn't have any uprisings, no GIs were attacked on trains or the dock areas. So by the time Faubion [Bowers] got on, in the latter part of Faubion's regime, we were more keyed to surveillance of leftist theatre. The Cold War had begun….And our guard was up for leftist theatre'.[14]

In 1949 the formal censorship system was abolished altogether, but meanwhile, surveillance of the Left in Japan was intensifying. The occupation authorities reinstated Japanese public officials who had been purged for their connections to the wartime state, and shifted instead to a 'Red Purge' of those considered to be radical or communist. A major target of this purge was public school teachers. For some SCAP officers, indeed, there was no distinction between communist-inclined teachers and the 'former Nazi and Japanese militarists'.[15] In the six months from September 1949 onward, the Japanese government, acting on orders from SCAP, dismissed over a thousand teachers for suspected links to communism.[16] This, of course, had a lasting influence on the teaching of history in post-occupation Japan.

Good War, Bad War: The War Guilt Information Program

Meanwhile, the occupiers, like the wartime Japanese authorities before them, were engaged not only in censorship, but also in a campaign to disseminate their own vision of the past. The central element in this campaign was the War Guilt Information Program, carried out by SCAP's Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) from September 1945. According to the instructions given to CIE, one of the aims of the program was 'to acquaint the Japanese with their responsibility for the war, with the atrocities they had committed, and with their war guilt', but at the same time it sought to 'make the Japanese aware that their militarists [were] to blame for their defeat and suffering'.[17]

The CIE officers who implemented the program interpreted these instructions in their own way. They realised that preaching to the Japanese *en masse* about 'their war guilt' was not a good way to endear the occupiers to the occupied, and so they generally took pains to define ordinary Japanese people as the victims, rather than the perpetrators, of militarism. The narrative of the war history that they wanted to convey to the Japanese public was set out extended essay, entitled simply 'History of the Pacific War' (*Taiheiyō Sensōshi*) which was published in ten instalments in all the major Japanese national newspapers in December 1945 (with the first instalment symbolically appearing on 8 December, the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor). The title itself was important. In Japan, the conflict had been known as the 'Great East Asia War' (*Dai-Tōa Sensō*). Renaming it shifted the focus away from China and other parts of mainland Asia, and towards the struggle between the US and Japan in the Pacific.

Readers were left in no doubt about the authorship of this version of history. Each episode was clearly labelled. The introductory essay published on 8 December covered a double-page spread in the newspapers, and began with the words:

> The crimes committed by Japan's militarists against the people of the nation are innumerable, but although some have already been made public, many have not yet been brought to light. With the passage of time, however, they will surely be made known from unshakably clear documentary evidence.

If you go back and read these articles today, I think that the first thing that strikes you is that they are very unreadable. It is not known how many people actually read 'The History of the Pacific War', either in newspaper form or later, when it was published as a book. But December 1945 was a time of struggle and suffering for most Japanese people, and it is likely that many were too busy with the mundane tasks of survival to spend time reading the rather turgid prose of SCAP's historians.

SCAP's historical narrative began by documenting the suppression of freedoms in prewar

Japan, arrests for 'thought crimes' under the Peace Preservation Law, and acts of violence and assassination carried out by radical militarist groups in the 1930s. It gave a detailed account of the 1931 Japanese takeover of Manchuria and the creation of the puppet state of Manchukuo. The account of Japan's subsequent full-scale invasion of China from 1937 onward highlighted the 1937-1938 Nanjing Massacre, in which 'over 20,000' civilian men, women and children were killed. Readers were told that their increasingly militarised government had failed to take up opportunities for diplomatic resolutions of disputes with other countries, and had instead pursued policies of rearmament and the creation of exclusive economic blocs, thus leading Japan inexorably into a disastrous war. The article ended with an account of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia, which included stinging criticism of the Japanese military's treatment of prisoners of war.

The remaining nine articles in the series were mainly taken up with relatively dry and detailed accounts of military engagements between Japan and the Allies—particularly in the United States—in the Pacific. Ongoing fighting in China fades from the picture, though the spectre of war crimes does appear again in the discussion of Japanese mistreatment of POWs and civilian detainees in the Philippines. Throughout, the aim is clearly to demonstrate to the Japanese public how their own military leaders and media had misled them by feeding them stories of victory when Japanese forces were already in retreat. 'The History of the Pacific War' focused blame for the disasters of war squarely on the figure of wartime prime minister Tōjō Hideki, who was presented as being an aberration in Japanese history: a figure who had succeeded in concentrating an exceptionally large amount of power in his own authoritarian hands. Japan's other wartime prime ministers, particularly Suzuki Kantarō, were by contrast presented as more conventional conservatives whose main offence was their incapacity to extract Japan from the quagmire of war. The final episode of the series dealt with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and (rather cursorily) with Japan's surrender. The central message here was that the atomic bombs had saved the rest of the Japanese population from the horrors of prolonged ground war on the soil of Japan itself. Though the article provided details of physical destruction caused by the atomic bombs, it remained silent on their human toll.

There are other silences too. As in all accounts of history, the omissions are as interesting as the inclusions. The most resonant silence surrounded the part played by Emperor Hirohito, who was barely mentioned at all. A crucial (though unspoken) aim of the War Guilt Information Program was to circumvent possible discussion of the war guilt of the emperor by focusing a steady beam of attention on Tōjō and his circle. To put it another way, the whole program was at least as much about who was not guilty as about who was.

Another retelling of the same story was more influential. This was the radio program *Shinsō wa Kō Da* (literally 'This is the Truth', but more commonly rendered in English as 'The Truth Can Now Be Told'), broadcast by the national radio corporation NHK from 9 December 1945, with a series of spin-offs continuing until early 1948. *Shinsō wa Kō Da* was essentially a dramatized version of 'The History of the Pacific War', following the same narrative structure. The big difference was that it was presented in more digestible form, as a dialogue between a narrator and Tarō, a Japanese Everyman, representing the Japanese people who were still in the process of learning the new version of historical truth revealed by the occupiers.

An extract of the dialogue from a surviving episode, dealing with the battle of Okinawa, gives a flavour of the program's style:

> *Narrator:* The number of allied soldiers killed in battle in Okinawa was 6,990, and the number of wounded was 29,598.
>
> *Tarō:* Do you think those figures are correct?
>
> *Narrator:* There can be no mistake about them. Why are you asking?

Tarō: Wow. I thought the newspapers said that the Battle of Okinawa inflicted greater damage on the enemy.

Narrator: Hmm. I guess they may have said that. That's because the [Japanese] Military Headquarters, in their desperation, were telling a pack of lies.[18]

Not all listeners were persuaded. NHK and the actors who performed the roles in the dialogue were inundated with letters of complaint, many of them accusing the actors of betraying their nation. The number of thank you letters from listeners who found the program informative was much smaller.[19] If this was 'brainwashing', SCAPs techniques clearly left something to be desired.

The SCAP's Civil Information and Education Section also tried to convey a similar narrative of the war to the Japanese public by ensuring that the press reported the evidence presented to the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, which opened in May 1946.[20] But here again, the silences were significant. There was a strong focus on the evidence against leading military figures, most notably Tōjō, though other issues, including the Nanjing Massacre, were also covered. As Totani Yuma has pointed out, the trial court did also hear some evidence of sexual violence against women and 'forced prostitution' (as it was then called), not only inflicted on European civilian detainees but also on local civilians in Indonesia.[21] But this did not make it into Japanese press reporting. Neither SCAP nor the Japanese media seem to have had an interest in highlighting the issue, and the evidence was presented in a vague manner that made it difficult for journalists to grasp the details of the charges unless they conducted their own further research.

The Nation's Trajectory

The other crucial way in which the occupation authorities tried to shape Japanese understandings of the history of the war was, of course, though school education, and particularly through the officially approved history textbook *Kuni no Ayumi* (The Nation's Trajectory), which, after various vicissitudes, was completed by a select team of four historians: Ienaga Saburo, Morisue Yoshiaki, Okada Akio, and Ōkubo Toshiaki,[22] with Ōkubo mainly responsible for the section on the war. The project was overseen by occupation officials, who at times intervened to tweak the text; they reportedly insisted that the description of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor should make it clear that Japan launched its attack before officially declaring war, and that the statement that Japan 'occupied Nanjing [*Nankin o senryō shita*]' should be changed to read 'laid waste to Nanjing [*Nankin o arashita*]'.[23]

But overall, the discussion of Japanese territorial expansion and the Asia-Pacific War in *Kuni no Ayumi* is both brief and extremely bland. For example, the entire history of Japanese colonial rule over Korea is condensed into one sentence: 'then [Japan] signed a treaty with Korea, and after that, as a result of further negotiations, our country annexed Korea in 1910'.[24] This, of course, was perfectly in line with the historical perspective of the occupation authorities, who by and large held an entirely uncritical view of Japan's colonization of Taiwan, Korea, and Karafuto. In *Kuni no Ayumi*, the lead-up to Pearl Harbor is explained as a contest between a peace-seeking Japanese government and the belligerent 'military faction' [*gunbu*], with the latter unfortunately winning out in the end, and the events of the war itself are reduced to a litany of territories won and then lost, concluding with the statement, 'for a long time, the people of our nation suffered greatly because of the war. What caused this unhappiness was that fact that the military faction controlled the people and waged a useless war.'[25] No hint here of the notion that anyone other than the people of 'our nation' might have suffered along the way. *Kuni no Ayumi* was only in use as a textbook from 1947 to 1949, but it set the tone for many of the history textbooks that followed.

The Guardians of the Archive

The most remarkable piece of SCAP sanctioned war history writing, though, was the

compilation of war archives and the writing of a history volume overseen by the head of SCAP intelligence, Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby. A passionate anti-communist and avowed admirer of Mussolini, Willoughby quickly established friendly relations with leading figures from Japan's wartime intelligence establishment. While the Civil Censorship Division was deploying its key logs to weed out militarism and nationalism, Willoughby had created a 'Historical Materials Section', attached to SCAP's Demobilization Board, which was headed by Hattori Takushirō, former secretary to Tōjō Hideki and chief of the Operations Section of the Japanese military's General Staff.[26] The official role of the group was to collect and analyse Japan's wartime archives and write a history of the war, and another of its key members was Arisue Seizō, the Japanese Imperial Army's wartime chief of intelligence.[27]

As Willoughby later wrote, these people had been 'the brains' of the former Imperial Japanese General Staff, and the history-writing project was a kind of welfare scheme 'to keep them from starving'.[28] His unrealised ambition was to use this group as the nucleus of a future Japanese army.[29] From the point of view of Hattori, Arisue, and the other members, one advantage of the project seems to have been the opportunities it provided, not only to unearth and preserve the archive of Japan's military actions in Asia, but also to make parts of it disappear. A US official note from May 1946 advised that some Japanese War Ministry documents 'of a special nature' were missing from the official catalogue of files, 'having been left in the charge of Arisue.'[30]

The history of the war which emerged from this project was written entirely from the perspective of the Japanese military leadership. Lavishly illustrated with reproductions of military maps and artworks by Japanese war artists, it is further enlivened by occasional edited extracts from soldiers' diaries. Its overall presentation of the war is one which wholeheartedly exculpates the Japanese authorities, and particularly the Emperor, from any blame. It concludes with an essay by Matsudaira Yasumasa of the Imperial Household Agency, which begins with the words, 'The Pacific War broke out despite all efforts exerted by the Emperor to prevent the calamity', and continues much in the same vein.[31] But this account did not have any immediate impact on historical debates about the war, either inside or outside Japan, because it was not published until 1966. The main reason for the delay was apparently that General MacArthur refused to authorise its publication, arguing that it needed further editing.[32] There are certainly a number of very odd mistakes in the work, which was eventually published in uncorrected form after MacArthur's death (perhaps the oddest mistake is the inclusion in the work of an advertisement for a meeting about the National Police Reserve, the quasi-military force created by the occupation authorities in 1950, which has no connection at all to contents of the work, but presumably just happened to be lying around on the desk of one of its authors when the book was compiled).

When the history did ultimately appear, it was published under the oddly unrevealing title *Reports of General MacArthur, Volume 2*. Volume 1 is a history of the war from the US military perspective, while Volume 2 (which consists of two separate parts) is written from the Japanese command's perspective, to the point that the word 'the enemy', when it appears in the volume, always refers to the United States and its allies. It is not clear exactly which individuals authored this history of the war, but the Forward tells us that Volume 2 'represents the contribution of Japanese officers employed to tell their story of operations against MacArthur's forces'.[33] The story of this project and its legacies is something which, I think, deserves further research. Though its immediate impact seems to have been small, it certainly contributed to the preservation into the postwar era (and beyond) of the narrative of the Pacific War created in wartime by the Japanese High Command itself.

Addressing War Responsibility from Below

The occupation authorities, then, certainly tried to mould the narrative of the war that was

created in Japan in the late 1940s, and their efforts had some lasting effects. But, as in so many other aspects of occupation policy, the story was a complex and contradictory one, and the impact of these initiatives were limited both by the divergent views of different sections of SCAP and by the relatively simplistic techniques by which the occupation authorities tried to convey their messages. So, looking at official documents gives us only a very limited insight into the impact of the occupation on Japanese understanding of war history.

The really exciting part of the story starts to appear when we look at was what was happening in the private and unofficial sphere—not only in the work of academic historians, but in the remarkably diverse and vibrant efforts of ordinary citizens to make sense of the disasters which had overwhelmed their lives in the course of the past decade. Recent works by historians like Narita Ryūichi have documented the occupation-era proliferation of personal memoir writing by people who had experienced life on the battlefront or the trauma of chaotic evacuation and flight from Japan's lost wartime empire.[34]

The radical social rupture caused by Japan's defeat both opened space and created a need for new forums where Japanese people could share ideas and make sense of their experiences together, and this helped to fuel the occupation-era growth of the 'circle movement'—small informal discussions groups in which people could address a wide range of intellectual and emotional needs. Some of the postwar circles addressed economic issues such as worker's rights, some of them focused on cultural creativity, and some were centrally concerned with sharing memory of the war and reflecting on its historical meaning. They were diverse and vibrant—some ephemeral and some long-lasting—but together they had a major influence on the efflorescence of new streams of 'people's history' in the 1950s and 1960s. Here, for reasons of time, I should like to focus on just one example which I find particularly fascinating.

In April 1947 in Nagano Prefecture, a small group of young men who had been demobilised from the armed forces at the end of the war started to produce a little newsletter called *Mumei no Hana*—the nameless flower.[35] For them, as for so many of their generation, the experience of war and defeat had produced an existential crisis for which, at that time, there was of course no support or help or trauma counselling. The central figure in the group, Shiratori Kunio, had been still in his teens and undergoing training in the Imperial Navy's Accounts Section when the war ended, so he had not seen action, but he and other members of the group were tormented by the fact that they had spent the war years preparing to die a glorious death on the battlefield, and many of their comrades in arms had gone to their deaths, but they themselves had survived.[36] Though they came to develop a passionate rejection of war, their interpretations of their own experiences were complex, varied and changing, and remind us of the dangers of trying to pigeonhole individuals too simplistically into politico-historical categories.

In 1949 they changed the title of their journal to *Yamanami*—Mountain Ridge—and in 1950 they suspended publication for a while because of other commitments. Shiratori had returned to high school after the war and then gone on to study at the University of Tokyo. After graduation, he took up a teaching post at a school in a small town in Akita Prefecture, while his friends from the Mountain Ridge Association (*Yamanami no Kai*)—as it was now known—found work in various parts of the country. This helped to spawn a network of small, loosely-linked local groups in Nagano, Akita, Tokyo, Tsukuba, Nagoya, Shikoku, and elsewhere.[37] In 1956, they revived their journal with an issue featuring an article by Shiratori entitled 'My War Responsibility', and in 1959 they held the first a of series of meetings bringing together *Yamanami no Kai* members from across the country.[38]

The quest to develop their own distinctive approach to war responsibility was at the core of the group's discussions and writings, and although this approach cannot be simply encapsulated in a few sentences, it had several features which make it (I think) continuingly relevant in the present day. First, it was diverse—a key principle of the group was the right of

members to disagree with one another, to say '*watashi wa chigau*'—it was different for me.[39] Second, it was profoundly personal. 'War responsibility' here was not a matter of drawing up some kind of historical accounting spreadsheet on which one allocated guilt to nations, national governments, or political leaders. Rather, it was about reflecting on one's own experience of history, understanding oneself as an agent of historical events (even if an agent with very limited power to influence those events), and thinking what one might have done differently with the wisdom of hindsight. One purpose of this was to understand one's own position in the ongoing historical events of the present day: to 'unearth the ground beneath your own feet' (as they put it), or, in Shiratori's words, the crucial thing was to 'see history through seeing the things that exist in the place where you are right now'.[40]

To develop a sense of historical responsibility, then, did not mean that one could not also be in some senses a victim of history. *Yamanami no Kai* members were encouraged to think about and discuss their wartime sufferings as well as the actions which they might regret. Their writings therefore capture complexities which often disappear in historical accounts that reduce individuals to ciphers of militarism or pacifism, cooption or resistance. Shiratori, for example, recalled how he and his school classmates had been drawn into the mania of enthusiasm for war, and yet how they still felt a curious sense of respect for the one and only teacher who, in the latter stages of the war, told them that he believed Japan would be defeated. Maybe, Shiratori speculates, this was because the felt that he was speaking from the heart, or maybe it was because they had absolutely no conception of what 'defeat' really meant.[41]

Their focus on war responsibility also absolutely did not mean swallowing the narrative of war propounded by the allied occupation forces. Members of the group were for the most part extremely critical of the occupation forces, and the urgency of their discussions about war responsibility was driven almost as much by their horror at the Korean War and the spectre of the emerging Cold War as it was by memory of the Asia-Pacific War itself. A rallying cry of the organization was the impassioned declaration *sensō wa iya da*—I hate war—and an important theme of their discussion was the question of how to go beyond that cry, and to turn the hatred of war into practical action. Nor was the question of historical responsibility simply a matter for those who had served in the imperial armed forces, or who had experienced the Asia-Pacific War. The *Yamanami no Kai* survived into the twenty-first century, and the questions that it posed about our responsibility for the history which we live were taken up by later generations, including those involved in 1960s Anpo protests and in later peace and other social movements.

Conclusions

Looking back at occupation-era attempts to shape the narrative of the Asia-Pacific War, I am struck by an irony. What the occupation authorities and today's right-wing revisionists have in common is their shared belief that the Japanese populace is readily brainwashed. Early in the occupation, one US official likened the minds of the Japanese to an hourglass full of sand, and speculated whether 'by inverting the hourglass, perhaps concepts and principles of democracy could be poured into Japanese minds as easily as concepts of totalitarianism, militarism, and ultranationalism'.[42] Re-reading the writings of the occupation period, it becomes clear, I think, that the answer to that speculation is, 'no, they could not'. In the first place, the sand that the occupiers tried to pour through the hourglass was a multi-hued mix of extremely contradictory messages; in the second place, their methods were too crude, and the minds of the Japanese people were far too varied and sophisticated, for such a simple reprograming of brains to be achieved.

On the contrary, what we do find, looking back at the occupation and the start of the First Cold War, is a vibrant landscape in which a remarkably large number of Japanese people grappled in diverse ways with fundamental questions of history, memory, and responsibility. The ideas and questions that they generated

have resonance for us, in the third decade of the twenty-first century, as we confront the realities of an emerging Second Cold War in East Asia. How can we re-discover the urgency of the cry that motivated the members of the *Yamanami no Kai—sensō wa iya da*—I hate war? And how can we too unearth the history beneath our own feet, and learn to 'see history [and our own historical responsibility] through seeing the things that exist in the place where we are right now'?

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