

Thesis

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From Hiroshima to Godzilla:

Japanese views on the Americanization of Japan after the Second World War in cinema and literature

広島からゴジラへ：日本人から見た第二次大戦後の映画
及び文学における日本のアメリカ化

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Abstract

This paper examines the effects of the American occupation in Japan during the postwar years and the Japanese outlook thereof. Findings seem to suggest an acceptance of the American influence on Japan, as a large quantity of new regulations were imposed with positive feedback. By and large, the Japanese people have had enough of the war and were welcoming to their new leaders, as general living conditions of the Japanese improved over the years. Americanization certainly was present in postwar Japan due to the unprecedented power of the United States in Japan and the major reforms they imposed, together with heavy censorship of cinema and literature. Critique on the United States is directed onto the tragic effects of the atomic bomb and the loss of traditional family values due to Western influences, rather than directly blaming the United States.

Keywords: Japan, United States, Americanization, cultural history, World War II, postwar.

Introduction

In 1853, a small fleet of American gunboats arrived alongside the Japanese coast. Japan, while still closed off¹, was forced to open the country by Commodore Matthew Perry. For over two centuries, interaction with foreigners was forbidden by the feudal shogun. It was in 1868 that Japan became a new nation-state when dissident samurai overthrew the Shogunate and established a government in the name of the emperor. Unlike other Asian countries that were colonized by the West, Japan instead emulated and joined the latter, while retaining its own ‘Eastern spirit’.² Imperial Japan quickly gained colonies overseas and started to play a big role on the international stage, even being seated as one of the ‘Big Five’ nations at the peace conference in Versailles after WWI. The ‘Great Empire of Japan’ continued expanding and, ultimately, during WWII, suffered a major defeat. What followed was the occupation of Japan, which lasted from August 1945 until April 1952. During the years of occupation, Japan had no sovereignty; no decisions were possible without the conquerors’ approval, public criticism of the American regime was strictly prohibited, and movies and literature were heavily censored.³ The United States was imposing its will onto the Japanese people.

So what exactly happened during this period of occupation? Can we speak of the Americanization of Japan? What exactly does Americanization mean? More importantly, what was the Japanese response to the occupation? Did they respond with acceptance or with resentment? These questions and more will be analyzed and answered in detail. The aim of this paper is to examine Japanese perceptions of the American influence in postwar Japan and see how that perception compares to the actual undertakings of the United States. By analyzing a fixed amount of popular Japanese postwar novels and feature films, a broad and comprehensive understanding can be reached.

¹ The term for Japan being closed off is called *sakoku*, meaning ‘national isolation’ (鎖国). It should be noted that Japan had not been entirely isolated from the world during the period of *sakoku*. For instance, the Dutch were allowed to trade, but they could only do so at the port of Nagasaki, on a small island called Dejima. C. Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction* (New York 2009) 48.

² Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan*, 51. Japan wanted to assimilate Western technology and ideas, while retaining their own culture and values. This is called *wakon yousai* (和魂洋才), which translates to ‘Japanese spirit with Western learning’.

³ J. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York 1999) 19-23.

Needless to say, there is no such thing as a singular ‘Japanese’ response. Rather, it is remarkable how diverse the responses were.⁴ However, because these works were so popular in its time, it is naive to say that these responses were not in some way representative of the Japanese people. Why, then, were these works so popular?

Instead of taking a political or economic approach to determine the Japanese response to the Allied occupation, this thesis will focus on a cultural-historic outlook. Many prominent scholars of Japanese history, including Andrew Gordon, John Dower, Kenneth Henshall and Brett Walker, all have conducted extensive research on Japan and the postwar occupation. However, most of the research has been focused on the economic and political stage. Although several historians include a cultural perspective⁵, it fades into the background compared to the abundance of political and diplomatic research. What the historiography of Japan clearly lacks is a history ‘from within’, a narrative of Japanese perspectives and how their outlook is perceived through the means of movies and books. While this thesis cannot hope to deliver a definitive and complete answer, it can at least contribute to the study of Japan by illuminating the perspective of the Japanese citizens.

Although my research is focused on the Japanese side of the story, most of my groundwork will be accomplished using secondary literature from Western scholars. Not only will this provide a Western perspective, but it can also be used to see if the concept of Americanization exists among Western scholars. Using and comparing these (dis)similar views will provide a basis for my own interpretation of Americanization, which I will use to differentiate between the American and Japanese side of the story. To examine the Japanese response, I have limited my selection to three popular postwar Japanese feature films and three popular postwar (translated) Japanese novels. These include *Genbaku no Ko* (1952), *Tokyo Monogatari* (1953) and *Gojira* (1954). On the literary side, Mishima Yukio’s *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956), Kojima Nobuo’s *Embracing Family* (1965), and Oe Kenzaburo’s *Hiroshima Notes* (1965) will be investigated. I have specifically chosen these works because they were highly popular during the postwar era, and are thus a viable option for capturing an exemplary Japanese frame of

⁴ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 25.

⁵ Historians John Dower and Christopher Goto-Jones both have dedicated some chapters to the cultural history of postwar Japan, but ultimately their focus is strictly on the political stage of Japan.

mind.⁶ In addition, the United States implemented heavy censorship on the press and any other form of media during the occupation of Japan. This means that there are simply no resources to explore that were not censored in one way or another, and items such as newspapers and opinion polls were not in any way reliable. Ergo, all the works examined are from after the occupation period due to their uncensored nature. Throughout this thesis, I have followed the Japanese convention in which the family name precedes the given name. When identifying the authors of publications in English, this rule is principally changed; however, for the sake of continuity, I have chosen not to do so. Any Japanese words that are used in this thesis will be elucidated in the glossary, found at the end of the paper.

⁶ The films are translated in English as ‘Children of the Atomic Bomb’, ‘Tokyo Story’, and ‘Godzilla’ respectively. The reason why I have purposely chosen to use the original Japanese name is to keep true to the source material as much as possible. These are Japanese movies, and therefore it is appropriate to use the Japanese name. The novels, however, are addressed in English. This is because, for my research, I have read the novels in English, instead of Japanese. Interpretations I gained from these novels are based on the English version of the books, and therefore it is appropriate to use their English titles.

Chapter One: Americanization in Japan

1.1 Japanese Defeat

Accepting the terms set forth in Declaration (...), We have commanded the Japanese Imperial Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters to sign on Our behalf the Instrument of Surrender presented by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (...).

We command all Our people forthwith to cease hostilities, to lay down their arms and faithfully to carry out all the provisions of Instrument of Surrender and the General Orders issued by the Japanese Imperial Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters hereunder.⁷

Imperial Rescript Announcing Surrender to the Japanese People,
September 2 1945.

Even before the war had ended, many Japanese military officials secretly knew that the war was unwinnable. Japan had run out of everything: fighter planes, food, oil. It only had people left, and when the bombing of Japan began, even that was diminishing rapidly. Japanese leaders knew very well that the war could no longer be won by conventional means. Instead, they prepared for an all-out final stand. Suicide was an honorable sacrifice demanded of all Japanese soldiers who were captured by the enemy—there was no greater shame than defeat.⁸ As the situation worsened, military suicide tactics became national policy. Schoolchildren were ordered to write letters to Japanese soldiers, telling them to ‘die gloriously’, and women and children were forced to jump off cliffs when the enemy was closing in, or to act as human cover for Japanese troops. Others were forced to make room in hiding places for Japanese soldiers by killing themselves and their families. Either way, each of these measures—and many others—were taken in the name of the *kokutai*, ‘so that it may live on forever’, even if all the Japanese had to die in the process.⁹ But to no avail.

The unconditional surrender of Japan meant that the United States was in full control of the restoration of the former. Its military was disbanded and political institutions were to be

⁷ United States Department of State, *Occupation of Japan: Policy and Progress* (Hawaii 2004) 64.

⁸ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 38.

⁹ A. Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (New York 2014) 224-225; I. Buruma, *Inventing Japan: 1853-1964* (USA 2004) 122-125. In short, *kokutai* stands for national polity. For a more in-depth explanation of *kokutai*, please turn to the glossary.

completely reformed, including the *zaibatsu*. Officially, the occupation was to be shared by all of the Allied powers, but in practice, it was an American endeavor from the very beginning.¹⁰ The execution of policy in Japan was in the hands of General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). No other Allied nation could challenge his authority. He proposed to change the government's structure so that Japan would never again become a threat to the peace and security of the world. By doing so, a peaceful and responsible government would be established.¹¹ The SCAP had an enormous staff, both military and civil, but very few of them had extensive knowledge or experience of Japan. This led them to implement many American institutions onto Japan, not because they felt that they were appropriate, but because they were familiar with them.¹² To everyone's surprise, the Emperor was allowed to retain his position, in the courtesy of the SCAP, but only had a symbolic role as figurehead of the nation. He was subordinate to MacArthur's authority.¹³

Japanese leaders feared that, in defeat, a revolution would sweep away the imperial institution and, in its place, implement state socialism based on a Soviet model.¹⁴ Such fears were only intensified after the surrender of Japan. According to historian Andrew Gordon, profound tensions and conflict have remained constant features of postwar Japanese life.¹⁵ What precisely did the United States implement during the occupation, and how did that change Japanese life?

¹⁰ Buruma, *Inventing Japan*, 131-132.

¹¹ United States Department of State, *Occupation of Japan*, 18.

¹² W. G. Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan* (London 1963) 281.

¹³ K. Henshall, *A History of Japan: From Stone Age to Superpower* (New York 2012) 144; United States Department of State, *Occupation of Japan*, 89, 118-119. In the newly drafted constitution of Japan of April 22nd 1946, it states that 'The Emperor shall be the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people, deriving his position from the sovereign will of the people. (...) The Emperor shall perform only such state functions as are provided for in this constitution. Never shall he have powers related to government'.

¹⁴ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 224.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 224.

1.2 Impose Democracy, Save the Emperor

The main intention of the United States was to demilitarize and democratize Japan.¹⁶ As General MacArthur had put it: ‘First destroy the military power. Punish war criminals. Build the structure of representative government. Modernize the constitution. Hold free elections. Enfranchise women. Release political prisoners. Liberate the farmers. Establish free and responsible press. Liberalize education. Decentralize the political power. Separate church and state.’¹⁷ Japan was demilitarized in order to, as the United States saw it, break the power of the Japanese military to oppose occupation and reformation. In other words, to prevent a national uprising backed by the military and to prevent ‘the will of war’.¹⁸ But while demilitarization was to be fierce and quick, democratization would take a different path. Initially, MacArthur wanted Japanese reform to come ‘from within’, to legitimize the radical top-down reforms. Reforms would then be the result of ‘the freely expressed will of the people’, creating what MacArthur called ‘a healthy blend between the best of theirs and the best of ours.’¹⁹

However, MacArthur also viewed the Japanese as mere childlike people who were prone to savagery if they were not taken firmly in hand. The context of this view was MacArthur’s comparison of Japan to Germany. Germany was a ‘mature race’, while the Japanese were in a ‘tuitionary condition’. The Nazi regime was simply a perversion of the highly developed Germany and could be drained without radically changing German society. The Japanese, on the other hand, had behaved like the children they were. But in their immature state, MacArthur believed, they could be flexible enough to improve under firm and fair guidance.²⁰ Soon, however, it turned out that Japan was not capable of coming up with a new constitution itself, so the United States took matters in its own hands and drafted its own constitution.²¹

¹⁶ Charles River Eds., *The Postwar Occupation of Japan: The History of the Transition from World War II to Modern Japan* (USA 2017) 33-34; Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan*, 92; Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 76; Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 227; Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 143, 145; Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*, 282; Buruma, *Inventing Japan*, 132; B. L. Walker, *A Concise History of Japan* (Cambridge 2015) 262; United States Department of State, *Occupation of Japan*, 18. Some authors highlight different aspects of the plans, but all of them are in agreement that this was the plan of the United States.

¹⁷ Walker, *A Concise History of Japan*, 262.

¹⁸ Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*, 282; Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 74, 77. Both works mention the ‘removal of all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people’.

¹⁹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 77; Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 144.

²⁰ Buruma, *Inventing Japan*, 132-133.

²¹ Walker, *A Concise History of Japan*, 266. Scholar Matsumoto Jouji was to write the new constitution, but in his rendition, sovereignty still belonged to the Emperor, instead of the people.

One of the other undertakings of the United States was the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, also known as the Tokyo Trials, in which Japanese war criminals were tried and executed. However, one notable person was missing in these trials: Emperor Hirohito. Indeed, MacArthur chose not to hold the leader of Japan responsible for the war. He himself believed that ‘if the Emperor were indicted, and perhaps hanged as a war criminal, military government would have to be instituted throughout all Japan’. A considerable amount of Japanese people was still loyal to the ‘divine’ Emperor—an execution would surely wreak havoc.²² MacArthur had also met with Hirohito before late in September 1945, who stated that he personally had not wished to attack Pearl Harbor and had wanted to avoid the war, regretting its occurrence. He intended to do his best in helping the United States with constructing a new Japan. MacArthur greatly respected the Emperor, making a plea for the retention of an innocent Hirohito, warning of dire consequences for the Occupation plans if this was not accepted.²³ Nevertheless, the United States did oversee the renunciation of his divine status, making him a symbol of the state, not the center of state sovereignty. As religion was now legally separated from the state, it was no longer a national duty to revere the god-emperor.²⁴ In exchange for his exemption, Hirohito promised to publicly support MacArthur in order to get the Japanese people on his side.²⁵

²² Walker, *A Concise History of Japan*, 265-266; Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 298-299.

²³ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 296-298; Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 147.

²⁴ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 148.

²⁵ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 298-299; Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 148. The Emperor now made meet-the-people tours throughout the whole country, showing himself as a ‘peace-loving harmless old man, whose thoughts were always with the people’.

1.3 Censorship of Japanese Media

With the occupation of Japan, cinema and literature became heavily censored. Any form of media that depicted anti-American sentiments or criticism of the Allied forces was censored or outright banned. General MacArthur was especially not to be criticized, as he was the new leader of Japan. The SCAP also wanted to remove any type of feature film that would idolize the feudal or militaristic pre-surrender regime. During the six and a half years of occupation, Japanese movie studios produced around one thousand feature films.²⁶ But even films that criticized Japanese militarism and the abuse of authority in pre-surrender Japan were sometimes suppressed. An example of this is the movie *Nihon no Higeki* (The Tragedy of Japan, 1946), which drew primarily on wartime footage to present a critical analysis of the ruling-class forces that had led Japan into an aggressive and disastrous war. According to one of the Americans who repealed the movie, the film showed ‘radical treatment of the Emperor and might provoke riots and disturbances’. Although the Emperor was merely a figurehead of the nation at that time, he still was held in high regard and the United States wisely acted upon that knowledge. However, it also showed that the censorship of films was slowly moving from militaristic objectives to left-wing ones. As time progressed, even hinting at the American occupation had become forbidden. Producers were to avoid GIs, jeeps, English-language signs, and buildings controlled by occupation forces. What this meant for Japanese cinema was that many aspects of the American occupation were simply to disappear in feature films before 1952, as if it never happened.²⁷

During the occupation, MacArthur also wanted to tackle Japanese propaganda films. He started an enlightenment campaign, in which Hollywood studios would produce and screen American movies throughout Japan, showcasing the American way of life. The goal was to introduce the United States as a political, social, and cultural model for the Japanese people. Although Japanese movies were still allowed to be produced and screened in cinemas (whilst under heavy censorship), the priority was to present American ideals.²⁸ A passage from the book *Hiroshima Notes* shows how portrayals of horrific events in which the United States was involved are censored:

²⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 426.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 427-431.

²⁸ Buruma, *Inventing Japan*, 136.

When this small picture book was published, it attracted the attention of many people, as it was a faithful account of the A-bomb experience and had a fascinating charm. In the same summer, however, another book was scheduled for publication in Hiroshima; though printed and bound, it was suppressed by the occupation forces because it depicted too vividly the A-bomb realities, and it was anti-American as well.²⁹

Because the heavy censorship was lifted after the Americans left Japan in 1952, there was more room for artists to express themselves via cinema, literature and other forms of media. This suggests that the true Japanese response was revealed after 1952, since there was significantly less pressure from the United States. A more honest approach to the ‘American era’, in turn, would follow. On the grounds of this reasoning, all the movies and novels covered in this thesis are from the post-American occupation period.

²⁹ Oe Kenzaburo, *Hiroshima Notes* (1965) 173. In Buruma’s *Inventing Japan*, it is explained how SCAP officials wanted to prevent unfavorable views, so they banned books and films about the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (136).

1.4 What is Americanization?

Americanization, in essence, is as historian Andrew Gordon argues, ‘the unprecedented experience of occupation by a foreign power (in this case the US) wielding the authority to rewrite laws, restructure the economic and political system, and even seek to redefine cultures and values’.³⁰ In other words, as historian Westad would argue, to shape Japan according to the model of the United States.³¹ Not only were the cultures and values going to be changed, but also the Japanese language itself. The Japanese writing system, with its highly intensive use of the *kanji* characters, was a stumbling block to Japan’s democratization. A new standardized and numerically reduced set of *kanji* characters³² (around 1850) was implemented for daily use in Japan, alongside the establishment of the use of *kana* characters (Japanese syllabaries). In addition, the Occupation forces also started teaching Romanized Japanese at new experimental schools.³³ Why, then, did the United States adopt this new Romanizing language policy, when MacArthur was seeking for a healthy blend between both cultures? If Japanese reform truly were to come from within, would it not be logical to not intervene in the language practices of everyday Japanese life? The answer can be found in the complexity of the Japanese writing system. The intricacy of the *kanji* system, in the opinion of the Occupation forces, helped contribute to an astonishingly low literacy rate among the Japanese. This, in turn, predisposed them to submit to the will of the militarist regime before and during the war. A new standardized system would help to tackle the literacy problem. Although the use of Chinese characters was never abolished, a considerable amount of Romanized Japanese became part of everyday life and still is today. According to a 1951 national survey test, the illiteracy rate of Japan had dropped to 1.7%, proving the effectiveness of the American-made compulsory education system.³⁴

³⁰ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 227.

³¹ O. A. Westad, *De Koude Oorlog: Een wereldgeschiedenis* (Houten 2017) 165.

³² This new set was called the *touyou kanji*, and would later be renamed to *jouyou kanji*, with 95 added Chinese characters.

³³ K. Nomoto, ‘The Japanese Language in the Postwar Period’, in *Japanstudien* 4:1 (1993) 183-185.

³⁴ Nomoto, ‘The Japanese Language in the Postwar Period’, 184. ‘270 locations nationwide were chosen in a two-step random sampling process. At each locality names were then drawn from resident cards on file yielding 21,008 survey respondents. Survey respondents were gathered together and administered a written test. Written mainly in kana, Chinese characters and numerals, the test had 90 questions (...) Each question was worth a point, for a total of 90 points. Point conversion was then performed to yield a total of 100 points. (...) the nationwide average on the literacy test was 78.3 points.’ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 230. ‘SCAP also sought to implement an American-style system of local school boards and local control.’

As the Japanese were lectured on their right to free speech, criticism of occupation policies was banned. Furthermore, SCAP officials were keen to present the United States as a model of virtue, and any unfavorable views were thus censored. But since free speech was part of Americanization, even mentioning the occupation censorship itself was forbidden.³⁵ It seems that the idealism of free speech had also brought a remarkable level of hypocrisy with it, as the Japanese were only given free speech on subjects that the United States approved of. Perhaps MacArthur's healthy blend was only a healthy blend for the United States. This conflicts with MacArthur's view, who envisioned a healthy blend of both cultures. Needless to say, when the new leader regards his subjects as mere children with a mentality that has grown over thousands of years like noxious weeds, it is not surprising if the situation would not evolve into a total blend, but rather, a blend that is heavily American and only partly Japanese.³⁶

Nonetheless, that is not to say the Japanese people did not welcome any new changes to their country. From a war's perspective, one could argue that the United States had liberated the Japanese people, as the regime's suicide policy in name of the *kokutai* had gone rampant and was destroying Japan internally. Therefore, the defeat brought a sense of relief among the Japanese people, as the fighting had finally come to an end. The dominant mood, however, was not one of hope, but rather of exhaustion and despair, also called *kyodatsu*.³⁷ As a result, the Japanese people were willing to accept anything if it meant that they did not have to go back to war. In fact, much to the surprise of the United States, the Japanese public were rather enthusiastic about the new reforms, fervently setting up trade unions, self-help organizations and political groups when given the permission to do so.³⁸ General MacArthur has also received thousands of cards and letters from across Japan, with the majority being supportive of the democratization agenda, and some even pushing for considerably more than what MacArthur first had in mind.³⁹

Taking into account all the aforementioned reasons, it can indeed be said that Americanization was present in postwar Japan, with the latter facing its biggest overhaul since the Meiji

³⁵ Buruma, *Inventing Japan*, 136.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 132-133.

³⁷ Charles River Eds., *The Postwar Occupation of Japan*, 23; Walker, *A Concise History of Japan*, 262-263; Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 227; Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*, 280.

³⁸ Westad, *De Koude Oorlog*, 161, 163; Charles River Eds., *The Postwar Occupation of Japan*, 45.

³⁹ Charles River Eds., *The Postwar Occupation of Japan*, 45.

Restoration. Democracy, women's rights, (limited) free press, a Romanized language structure, a figurehead Emperor, and a new constitution among other things were all features that were not present in prewar Japan. Although these reforms are not exclusively American, they have been implemented by the United States. The censorship of media and the press, not to mention demilitarization, also indicate how much the United States was in control of Japan. The ultimate goal of the United States during its occupation remained to shape Japan using an American model and it certainly came into effect.

The next chapter will look at various Japanese feature films and novels and see how Americanization was perceived through those works.

Chapter Two: The Japanese Perspective

This chapter provides a thorough analysis on the aforementioned feature films and novels. Various passages in said works are reviewed and the background and motives of the people behind their creation are researched.

2.1 Movies

2.1.1 Genbaku no Ko

Genbaku no Ko was released in August 1952 and directed by Shindou Kaneto. He directed over forty movies and wrote more than 200 scripts. Born in Hiroshima, Shindou started working at a film developing department, later becoming a screenwriter. After having served in the war, he returned to Japan and collaborated with director Yoshimura Kouzaburo. They both were known for having a dark outlook on life. *Genbaku no Ko* can be seen as a mixture between a documentary and fiction, as a fictitious story is put into a real-life setting, with the motive of informing the viewer about the tragedies of Hiroshima.

The main character of the movie, Ishikawa Takako, a teacher on an island close to Hiroshima, decides to visit her parents' and sister's grave in Hiroshima during the summer vacation, four years after the dropping of the atomic bomb. She comes across a beggar, who has worked for her father. His grandson is in an institution, but the children have barely enough to eat. Ishikawa further visits former students and colleagues who all have been affected in some way by the atomic bomb, whether its radiation illness, their parents dying, or becoming sterile. She decides to adopt the grandson of the beggar, who, being mentally and physically damaged from the atomic bomb dropping, commits suicide, condemning the war and the bomb.

Although it is known that the United States dropped the atomic bomb, it is never specified in the movie. Only the war and the 'A-bomb' were mentioned.⁴⁰ The film is set in 1949, when the

⁴⁰ Shindou Kaneto, *Genbaku no Ko* (Kindai Eiga Kyoukai 1952) 48:50. During this particular scene, a fatally ill girl is lying in her bed, talking about how she got hit by the atomic bomb. She never mentions Japan or the United States, but instead the war as a whole.

'Here I can say prayers for them. I ask God to bring us peace forever.'

'That is a very good thing to do.'

'Now I understand that war is the greatest evil. War is hell.'

American occupation was in full swing, but not in a single scene but one was there even a hint of the presence of the United States. Instead, the terror of the explosion itself and the damage it caused is highlighted. *Genbaku no Ko* tries to make the viewer focus on what Shindou thinks is most important: the people in the aftermath of Hiroshima. A portion of the movie explains what happened on the day of the dropping of the atomic bomb, showing the everyday lives of the people:

*'A man who was sitting, thinking on these steps, was instantly vaporized by the explosion. But his thoughts live on.'*⁴¹

Even though the movie shows victims with deformities and miserable lives, it also wants the viewer to understand that they want to move on from that event. The people of Hiroshima want to continue their daily lives and not be reminded of the atomic bomb. When Ishikawa took the ferry to Hiroshima, she conversed with the captain of the ship, who also seems to share the same vision:

'Miss Ishikawa! Where are you going?'
'To Hiroshima.'
'Going back, eh?'
'Where was your house?'
'Near the old prefectural office.'
*'It's better to lay those memories to rest.'*⁴²

What must be understood in particular in *Genbaku no Ko* is that the people of Hiroshima have accepted their role as the victims of the atomic bomb, in order to show the new generation that this must never be forgotten. This, however, only holds for the old generation that has experienced the atomic bomb and will die of radiation diseases. The younger generation must live on with a fresh start. One passage in particular exemplifies this frame of mind. In this scene, toward the end of the movie, an American plane is flying overhead. Ishikawa and her colleague look up with anxious faces, slightly trembling. After a few seconds, the young grandson says with slight enthusiasm 'Look, an airplane!'. What this scene seemed to suggest was that Ishikawa (the older generation) could never forget the events of Hiroshima, but the grandson (the younger generation), who also has experienced the atomic bomb, is not associating the sound of an airplane flying overhead with the bombing of Hiroshima. The younger generation has moved and has no choice but to move on.

⁴¹ Shindou, *Genbaku no Ko*, 15:11.

⁴² *Ibidem*, 7:12.

2.1.2 Tokyo Monogatari

Tokyo Monogatari was released in Japan in 1953 and was directed by Ozu Yasujiro. He first made several comedies before turning to more serious themes. During his childhood years, he developed a love for movies, including American movies during his military service. In Ozu's movies, family and marriage are prominent themes. His art style is unconventional, as the camera directly gazes at the person during dialogue scenes, which makes the viewer think he or she is being addressed. The camera placement is also lower than usual, being called the 'tatami shot', as if the viewer is looking while kneeling on a *tatami* mat. He lived with his mother until her death, which could explain family being a reoccurring theme in his movies.

The movie tells the story of an elderly couple who travel to Tokyo to visit their children in the postwar years. They, however, do not have much time or willingness to spend the day with their parents, so they try to send them away to a resort. Only their widowed daughter-in-law treats them with kindness and makes time for them. *Tokyo Monogatari* portrays the contrast between the old and new generation and the break-up of traditional Japanese family values by Westernization. The movie also features commentary on the Second World War. During a scene in which the elderly man and his friends are drinking, they talk about the war and how it took their kids' lives:

'I often wish at least one of my sons were alive.'

'Must have been hard to lose both of them. Didn't you lose one?'

'Yes, my second son.'

'I've had enough of war.'

*'Yes, indeed. To lose your children is hard, but living with them isn't always easy, either. A real dilemma.'*⁴³

This could be a reflection of the director's own thoughts regarding the war, although he never had any children. Nevertheless, this scene shows that even the old generation (supposedly the conservative generation) has had enough of the old times and does not want to go back, implying acceptance of the Western influences. However, this movie also strongly portrays the disintegration of traditional Japanese family values, as the new generation does not seem to have any respect left for the old generation. This could also suggest a negative view on the

⁴³ Ozu Yasujiro, *Tokyo Monogatari* (Shouchiku Co., Ltd. 1953), 1:06:30.

Western influences, as respect for the elderly and having a close family are key traits of Japanese culture.

What *Tokyo Monogatari* brings forward is a narrative of children inevitably drifting away from their parents and the loss of traditional family structure. It is not so much a critique of the loss of respect for the elderly, as it is still highly present in the movie. The connection between parent and child, however, is slowly vanishing due to the new (Western) developments in Japan. This view is further established during a scene, where the daughter-in-law is being praised by the elderly man for her kindness during the funeral of his late wife. He explains that he is surprised at how his children used to be so nice and that they now do not care much about him:

*'It's strange. We have children of our own, yet you've done the most for us, and you're not even a blood relative. Thank you.'*⁴⁴

Overall, *Tokyo Monogatari* can and cannot be considered as a critical commentary on the American occupation and Americanization. Indeed, the loss of traditional Japanese family values hint at it being the cause of American influences, and thus contribute to the stagnating situation of the elderly couple. However, the movie also shows that respect for the elderly is not entirely lost, and the theme focuses predominantly on the timeless conflict between parents and their children. Its message is universal, and not bound to a certain period in time. Therefore, one cannot draw a singular conclusion from this movie.

⁴⁴ Ozu, *Tokyo Monogatari*, 2:11:30.

2.1.3 Gojira

Gojira was released on November 3rd 1954, and directed by Honda Ishirou. He was drafted for military service in 1934 and served at the front for six years, being nearly killed by a mortar shell. After the war, he still had recurring nightmares and wanted to portray in his movies a grim and realistic portrait of the war.⁴⁵ Honda had worked in the documentary and war genres in earlier stages of his career, but later steered toward working with special-effects. *Gojira* is one example of his successful movies that includes special-effects. The movie became the eight-best attended movie in Japan in 1954, although it first came with mixed reviews, due to exploitation of the suffering during WWII. Over the years, however, the movie received increasingly more positive reviews.

Gojira starts off with several Japanese freighters being sunk after a sudden massive explosion. After investigation, it is discovered that a giant, 50-foot-tall dinosaur, has been disturbed from its natural underwater habitat by a hydrogen bomb testing. The movie never explicitly states what country conducted this testing, but it can be argued that it is the United States who was behind it, as the monster only attacks the Japanese. The monster, named Gojira, is now ‘unleashed’ because of the hydrogen explosion. Gojira himself is highly radioactive and destroys everything in its path, leaving enormous radioactive footprints behind. The movie ends with a scientist discovering a weapon called the ‘Oxygen Destroyer’, which disintegrates oxygen atoms. He then proceeds to use it, killing Gojira and taking himself with him. Yamane, the main scientist, then says that if nuclear testing were to continue, another Gojira might appear.⁴⁶

The theme of *Gojira* heavily centers around the outcomes of a nuclear holocaust. Gojira’s attacks symbolize the air raids of the United States on Tokyo during WWII, leaving the city in flames. In the movie, some scenes show the entirety of Tokyo being engulfed in flames as a result of Gojira’s fiery breath. Gojira then returns to the sea after the attacks. This is in line with the actions of the United States, as they only destroyed mainland Japan, and never actually went further inland.⁴⁷ Because the United States was presumably behind the nuclear

⁴⁵ S. Ryfle & E. Godziszewski, *Ishiro Honda: A Life in Film, from Godzilla to Kurosawa* (Connecticut 2017) 70.

⁴⁶ Honda Ishirou, *Gojira* (Toho Co., Ltd. 1954). The words of the scientist were: ‘I can’t believe Godzilla was the only surviving member of its species. But, if we keep on conducting nuclear tests, it’s possible that another Godzilla might appear somewhere in the world, again.’ (1:35:19)

⁴⁷ With the exception of Okinawa. The United States ultimately never fought in Tokyo.

testing and the creation of Gojira⁴⁸, the film could very well be seen as a way to blame the United States for dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the many struggles the Japanese people encountered in the aftermath.⁴⁹ Although the dropping of the atomic bomb or the existence of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is never mentioned, the movie provides a serious critique towards those past events. One passage in the movie has a scientist explain the dangers of using a powerful weapon, as it could destroy humankind. It is, however, at the end of this passage that the movie conveys a powerful message:

*'Ogata, if the Oxygen Destroyer is used even once, politicians from around the world will see it. Of course, they'll want to use it as a weapon. Bombs vs. bombs, missiles vs. missiles, and now a new super weapon to throw upon us all. As a scientist, no, as a human being, I can't allow that to happen. Am I right?'*⁵⁰

During this dialogue, the scientist is looking past the camera, as if speaking to a different person. However, when he exclaims the words 'Am I right', he turns and looks into the camera, directly confronting the viewer with this problem. Not only this scene, but another scene in particular heavily critiques the consequences of using nuclear weapons. In this scene, the scientist looks at a television broadcast of several scientists visiting hospital wreckages, where mostly women and children lie injured. One of them then holds up a Geiger counter⁵¹ towards one of the children, noticing it is beeping intensely. This is an obvious nod towards Hiroshima, as the scene further shows children who are severely wounded as a result of the radioactivity of Gojira.

Gojira indeed portrays the struggles of the Japanese people during the air raids of Tokyo and after the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The movie is not so much a critique of the American occupation, but rather, of the use of nuclear weapons, in Japan and the rest of the world. There is some direct political commentary on the actions of the United States, as Tokyo being in flames directly relates to the air raids in WWII, and Gojira leaving a radioactive footprint as he ravages the city landscape reflects the situation in Hiroshima. However, the main theme of the movie centers around the terror of the nuclear bomb and the consequences it brings.

⁴⁸ Honda, *Gojira*. The main scientist explains a correlation between the hydrogen bomb and Gojira: 'The evidence suggests that Godzilla itself must have absorbed an enormous amount of atomic radiation.' (26:50).

⁴⁹ It is never truly verified or confirmed, but a scene in the beginning of the movie shows sailors dropping modern Western equipment after the explosion, such as an electric guitar. The camera then focuses for a few extra seconds on that equipment. This could hint at Western powers (the United States) being behind the explosion.

⁵⁰ Honda, *Gojira*, 1:19:20.

⁵¹ A Geiger counter is used to measure levels of radiation.

2.2 Literature

2.2.1 Embracing Family

Kojima Nobuo has produced more than thirty volumes of fiction, essays, and criticism in his life. His book *Embracing Family* (1965) is his first book that was translated into English. Set during the American occupation, *Embracing Family* is a novel of conflict – between husband and wife, between Western and Eastern traditions. It tells the story of a Japanese professor, Miwa Shunsuke, and his wife, Miwa Tokiko, who are in a strained marriage. Every attempt by Shunsuke to save their disintegrating marriage only exacerbates the situation. Critics have viewed this book as a metaphor of postwar Japanese society, in which the traditional moral and philosophical basis of Japanese culture is neglected in favor of Western conventions.⁵²

In the opening scene of the book, Shunsuke finds out about the affair his wife is having with the American GI, who is living with them. Shunsuke brought the GI in, thinking he would be gone soon, but over a month had passed and there was still no sign of him leaving. This already could subtly hint at the Japanese thinking the American presence would be a short stay, but instead, ended up staying for longer than what they anticipated. When Shunsuke finds out about the affair, he does not fight the GI nor does he blame him. Rather, he casts blame on himself for his own incompetence. Because he could not satisfy his wife, she went to the American. Every attempt of Shunsuke to better the situation is done with the traditional Japanese mindset, ignoring the Western way. But that only makes the situation worse. The GI having an affair with the wife can be seen as the United States protruding their customs and standards into the living room, into the personal sphere. Shunsuke, arguably the stereotypical Japanese man, defeated, can only stand there. But instead of only being angry at the GI, he looks at his own behavior to see why it all came about in the first place. Shunsuke wants to forget that it all happened as soon as possible and live on with the new Western ways. But even then, his marriage is not restored, as his old Japanese ways still get in the way. The following passage demonstrates how even when adapting to the new standards, old habits can still be obstructive:

Mr. Yamagishi tries to be accurate, that's all. He's not aware of how people feel. Westerners have their own ways and customs, but you can't be natural acting like they do unless you grow up that way. When Japanese try to practice Western customs, we still use the Japanese language,

⁵² Kojima Nobuo, *Embracing Family* (1965) 1.

*so it doesn't work well. It only puts you off, and everyone else. It's the same the other way around.*⁵³

Shunsuke does not hate the Americans; in fact, he often went to the United States to give lectures on the American way of life. He was a recognized authority on the subject, having spent a year at an American university where he lectured on Japanese literature.⁵⁴ But even in his earnest attempts at integrating Western ways in his daily life, he does not understand that, because he kept sticking to his Japanese customs, the Western customs did not merge well into his life. The following passage shows that, despite his best efforts, Shunsuke is only lying to himself and his family:

*'While they waited at the reception desk, Shunsuke tried to help Tokiko remove her coat. She pushed his hand away. "But this is a Western custom," said Shunsuke. "It looks silly!" When an American officer glanced their way, Shunsuke grew quiet.*⁵⁵

This book can, therefore, be viewed as a classic example of the Japanese accepting the American occupation, but having trouble fully adapting to it. Even when one culture is slowly overpowering the other culture, there is no major defiance against it. There is occasional resistance due to conflicting customs and habits, favoring the Western practices, but the Japanese are willing to overcome those difficulties and find peace in the two cultures. It is their wish to move on from the conflicting events that happened in the past.

⁵³ Kojima Nobuo, *Embracing Family*, 142.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 6-7.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 9.

2.2.2 Temple of the Golden Pavilion

Mishima Yukio was born into a samurai family and imbued with the code of loyalty to the Emperor. He wrote many short stories, tackling themes such as homosexuality and the relationship between sex and violence. His book, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956), was one of his works that led him to rise to fame. Mishima believed that his work should somehow resemble Japan, and argued that the postwar period had left the Japanese confused about their values. This would then be the perfect time to revive the traditional Japanese ideal of *bushidou* (the way of the warrior).⁵⁶ After completing the *Sea of Fertility* tetralogy, on November 25th 1970, he committed *seppuku* at the age of 45.

Mizoguchi, the protagonist, becomes a hopeless stutterer after suffering the boyhood trauma of seeing his mother make love to another man, in the presence of his dying father. Taunted by his schoolmates, he feels utterly alone until he becomes an acolyte at a famous temple in Kyoto, where he develops an all-consuming obsession with the temple's beauty. The book greatly reflects Mishima's view of the Japan that had lost its values after the war, portrayed in the boy's thoughts and actions. *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* is, out of all three books researched, by far the most cryptic and complex work of literature. Each passage lends itself to a multitude of interpretations concerning postwar Japan. Many scenarios do not even hint at being a critique of the postwar society, but one can, after a closer view, clearly detect his outlook. Indeed, the whole book (that takes place during the postwar years) can be seen as Mishima's perspective of postwar Japan.

Mizoguchi became a stutterer after he witnessed his mother commit adultery. This could already be a representation of Japan in Mishima's eyes: the dying father is traditional Japan, the 'other man' is America, the mother who gives herself over to the other man is the new Japan, and the observer who becomes a stutterer is Mishima. He sees how the new Japan is being taken advantage of and betraying and destroying the old Japan, and because of this, Mizoguchi is effectively silenced. His stuttering is a reflection of Japan being heavily crippled by the United States, not able to stand up for itself without ridicule. The following passage is a more clear example of Mishima's perceptions:

⁵⁶ Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan*, 112-113.

If, on the other hand, I had committed the crime, I should (assuming that I had my wits about me) be able to make a good pretense of living in a state of peaceful purity that bespeaks innocence – the state, in other words, of someone who has nothing to confess. Well, I had better make the pretense. That was the best method for me, that was the only way in which I could establish my innocence. (...) For it was not as though I had no excuse for my actions. If I had not stepped on that girl, the American might well have reached for his revolver and threatened me. After all, one could not resist the Occupation forces. What I had done, I had been forced to do.⁵⁷

Mishima, in this passage, implies that the Occupation forces will only drive the Japanese into doing horrendous things, under the threat of the military force (the revolver). Stepping on the girl is not only meant as literally harming a person for no reason; it stands for Japan as a whole. ‘Stepping on Japan’ is what the Occupation forces made Mizoguchi do, which, self-evidently, made him hate them. Further in the book, a passage explains his anger at his Superior. He is not American, but the way of describing him suggests a personification of the United States:

I wondered why I had not arrived at the idea of killing the Superior before I had thought of setting fire to the temple. The possibility of killing the Superior had, I now realized, flitted through my mind; but I had instantly understood how useless it would be. For even if I should succeed in killing the Superior, his shaven priest’s head and that evil of his, which was compounded of powerlessness, would keep on appearing endlessly from the dark horizon.⁵⁸

Of course, by killing the Superior, Mishima undoubtedly meant killing the power of the Occupation forces. His shaven head is a representation of the shaven hairdos that GIs have, and setting fire to the temple can be understood as setting fire to Japan. He realizes that the Americans would only keep coming back if the Superior were to be killed, appearing endlessly from the dark horizon. This is an obvious reference to the various ships that came from overseas to Japan. It is also because of this gloomy outlook that Mishima decided to kill himself, saying he could not live in a Japan that had been so polluted and compromised by Western modernity.⁵⁹ It must be noted that Mishima was an extreme case, and that his views did not elicit much support in Japan.⁶⁰ However, by putting forward the loss of traditional values after the Second World War and the brutal force of the United States, he illuminates an interesting perspective on the experience of the occupation of Japan.

⁵⁷ Mishima Yukio, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956), 79-80.

⁵⁸ Mishima Yukio, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, 182.

⁵⁹ Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan*, 114.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 114.

2.2.3 Hiroshima Notes

Oe Kenzaburo was born in 1935 in Shikoku, on an isolated Japanese island. He became a writer on postwar Japan and had taken multiple journeys to Hiroshima, documenting and reporting his ventures. In 1963, Oe and his wife had a son who was born with a lesion of the skull through which brain tissue protruded. Still unable to decide whether to let the son die or live on with permanent brain damage, he accepted a commission to report on Hiroshima, twenty years after the atomic bomb dropped. His book, *Hiroshima Notes* (1965), is a collection of essays during his visits that summarizes his experiences and reflections on Hiroshima, while also bringing to light testimonies of the many victims that have or have not survived. In October 1994, Oe was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He stated his desire to continue writing about society and its feeling about the contemporary scene.

What immediately comes up in his book, is that the Japanese people of Hiroshima do not see themselves as victims of the Americans; rather, they see themselves as victims of the atomic bomb. Following the defeat of Japan shortly thereafter, the people felt there was nothing they could do anymore. Instead, they focused on their immediate survival, as various symptoms and diseases sprung up directly as a result of exposure to the radiation caused by the atomic bomb. These diseases continued to bring death and despair for more than twenty years after the atomic bomb was dropped. Innately, the Japanese wanted to take lessons out of the suffering, to get something positive out of all the misery the people have suffered. This passage illustrates that somewhat remarkable, dignified view:

*We surviving victims have made a solemn pledge that the same terrible disaster must never be repeated, and we should retain the dome as a monument dedicated to peace for all mankind. The atomic bomb is known to all the world, but only for its power. It still is not known what hell the Hiroshima people went through, nor how they continue to suffer from radiation illnesses even today, nineteen years after the bombing.*⁶¹

This does not mean that they think the Americans have no part in the dropping of the atomic bomb, however. While they do not see the Americans as the sole aggressor and reason behind the atomic bomb, they highlight the cruelty of man. Indirectly, they hinted at America and the rest of the world that what has happened is inexcusable and that it will never be forgotten. In

⁶¹ Oe Kenzaburo, *Hiroshima Notes*, 166.

typical Japanese writing style, the blame is never explicitly cast or mentioned, but reading between the lines reveals a certain grudge against the Americans:

*The ultimate defeat is, in short, to forget; especially to forget those who kill us. It is to die without any suspicion, to the very end, of how perverse people are. There is no use in struggling when we already have one foot in the grave. And we must not forgive and forget. We must report, one by one, everything we have learned about the cruelty of man. Otherwise, we cannot die. If we do this, then our lives will not have been wasted.*⁶²

In a sense, one could argue that the acceptance of the Hiroshima bombing can be linked with the acceptance of Americanization. The Japanese do not openly talk about who is to blame for the dropping of the atomic bomb. Rather, they see the atomic bomb as a lesson for the rest of the world. Indeed, the people of Hiroshima were victims, but they do not want to play the role of the victims. Their suffering was to have meaning, otherwise all the efforts of the survivors would have been for nothing. This passage of an elementary school child exemplifies how the Japanese almost seemed to take responsibility on themselves, not on who was to blame for dropping the atomic bomb, but rather on how to deal with the atomic bomb and life after it:

*The A-bomb, the A-bomb – it is the devil that took my father’s life. But I cannot bear a grudge against the atomic bomb. Because of it the people of our city rose up to insist, “No more Hiroshimas, no more Hiroshimas.” The people who died can be said to have sacrificed themselves for us. Their sacrifices are invaluable, and we should walk the way of peace, watched over by those noble victims.*⁶³

Judging from this book, it can be argued that, yes, the Japanese were accepting the occupiers. Bearing no grudge against the Americans, even after witnessing such a devastating explosion and being succumbed to misery for many following years, shows that the Japanese want to pick up where their lives left off. It seems as, just as the Hiroshima people, the Japanese have accepted their destiny.

⁶² Oe Kenzaburo, *Hiroshima Notes*, 112.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 175.

2.3 Findings

In each of the discussed works, a certain form of social or political commentary is present. Whether it be criticism of the war or the overpowering of the Japanese culture in favor of Western culture, every single work has portrayed a distinct message. However, what is critical to note, is that all of the analyzed movies and novels do not seem to be against the Americanization of Japan or suggest going back to how things were before the war. Certainly, these works do not necessarily think Americanization was the best thing to happen—there were a lot of circumstances the Japanese did not agree with. Nevertheless, almost every time the United States is criticized, it is about distinct matters. In *Genbaku no Ko*, *Gojira* and *Hiroshima Notes*, the atomic bomb is the focal point of criticism. In criticizing the atomic bomb, the United States is indirectly blamed. Still, they do not criticize what the United States has done after the war, but rather during the war. In *Tokyo Monogatari* and *Embracing Family*, loss of traditional Japanese family values in favor of Western values is its main point, but it also shows an acceptance of these changes and highlights occasional friction, rather than utter rejection. *Genbaku no Ko*, *Gojira* and *Tokyo Monogatari* also bring forward the aftermath of war and the condemnation thereof. The only true exception is *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, as it directly blames the United States for the downfall of Japan and the repression of its subjects. It can be regarded as a more direct and ruthless version of *Embracing Family*, as loss of traditional values is presented throughout the two novels.

Indeed, criticism of the United States is present in the analyzed feature films and novels. This criticism, however, does not seem to focus on Americanization in general. Instead, war issues such as the atomic bomb and the destruction of many innocent lives are primarily addressed. But even in these commentaries, the United States is not the only country who is held accountable. The Japanese people, surprisingly, condemn their own nation as well, which indicates that they could not have believed the United States was the only country to blame. All the evidence suggests that the Japanese people were embracing the new changes made in postwar Japan, albeit with several clashes during the occupation. The acts of the United States during the war, however, is an issue that, to this day, is deeply rooted into the memories of the Japanese people.

Conclusion

The occupation of Japan was in theory a collective endeavor of the Allied powers, but in practice an undertaking of the United States. It had two goals in mind: demilitarization and democratization of Japan. The United States disbanded the entire Japanese army and wanted Japan to come up with a new constitution. As the latter failed to create one that befitted the wishes of their occupiers, the United States drafted one themselves, granting ordinary citizens noticeably more freedom and reshaping the governmental structure. The Emperor was not held accountable for the war and remained seated, although he now only served as figurehead of the nation. In imposing these reforms, the United States wanted to shape Japan based on an American model. The Japanese people were more than welcoming to their new occupiers, as they simply had had enough of the war and were in a state of exhaustion and despair. They realized that they had been defeated and were obedient towards their new leaders, enthusiastic even. Along with new reforms also came heavy censorship, particularly in media outlets. Movies were banned from glorifying the prewar Japanese military regime and later footage of the occupation was also strictly forbidden. Literature with references to the glory of the Japanese nation and military, along with criticism of the United States or General MacArthur, was heavily censored. Instead, the United States tried to showcase and promote the American way of life as much as possible. It was only after the United States departed in 1952 that such works were allowed to be produced for the general public.

Because of the United States' unprecedented power in Japan and the abundance of reforms they imposed, while also trying to shape daily life, a certain degree of Americanization is concluded to be present during the postwar years. Limiting free press to topics only the United States would approve of, disbanding the entire army, introducing democracy, censoring criticism of the occupation, reorganizing the language and school structure and more all demonstrate the dominance of the United States in Japan.

The analyzed works indicate various degrees of criticism towards the United States. Themes such as the war, the dropping of the atomic bomb, and loss of Japanese (prewar) family values are explored. Works like *Gojira* and *Hiroshima Notes* were popular because they addressed a still highly relevant issue in the postwar history of Japan; the aftermath of the atomic bomb. The movies and novels could emotionally connect with the reader or viewer. These stories

reminded people of their experience during WWII, which is why they were met with critical acclaim, inside and outside of Japan. *Tokyo Monogatari* and *Embracing Family* explained how, on occasion, clashes can occur between the two vastly different cultures during the postwar period. In these commentaries, however, it is suggested that the Japanese blamed their own leaders just as much as the Americans for the horrors of the war. With the exception of the loss of traditional values, especially made clear in *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, almost all of the disapproval regarding the actions of the United States is based on war conducts, with the most notable being the dropping of the atomic bomb. The focus of criticism seems not to be what the United States has done after the war, but during said war. While it is true that Americanization had a colossal impact on the lives of common Japanese people, it was well received overall. The researched films and novels validate this statement, as not only Americanization, but the war and its consequences alike, were addressed.

A case study of six feature films and novels can, unfortunately, not even hope to grasp the full understanding of the mentality of the Japanese people during the postwar period, and rightfully so. Further research of popular postwar works, including but not limited to films and novels, is needed to expand our comprehension of the vast array of mentalities present in Japanese society. This essay can, however, prove as a starting point for further inquiry into the cultural history of postwar Japan.

Glossary

Acolyte: A person assisting a priest in a religious service or procession.

Bushidou (武士道): Samurai code of chivalry. Way of the warrior.

Dai Nippon Teikoku (大日本帝国): ‘Great Empire of Japan’, name of Japan during its imperial conquest. Ended in 1945 by surrendering, and in 1947, after the new constitution was established, its formal name became Japan.

Eiga (映画): Movie.

Genbaku (原爆): Atomic bomb.

GI: Government Issue. Used to describe soldiers of the United States Army.

Higeki (悲劇): Tragedy.

Jouyou Kanji (常用漢字): Kanji for common use (945 kanji established in 1981).

Kana (カナ): Collective name for the two syllabic writings of the Japanese writing system, the *hiragana* (ひらがな) and *katakana* (カタカナ). Hiragana is used for Japanese words, while katakana is mainly used for foreign words or emphasis.

Kanji (漢字): System of Japanese writing using Chinese characters, used primarily for content words.

Ko (子): Child.

Kokutai (国体): National ‘sacred’ polity. Idea of the Japanese nation conceived as an authoritarian family state, ruled by the divine emperor. Serving the emperor was not a duty or submission to authority, but rather a ‘natural manifestation of the heart’. Japanese troops and subjects were fighting a holy war, according to the emperor. The more brutal you were towards your enemy, the more you were serving your emperor. This is partly why the Japanese were known for their extreme cruelty towards their captives.

Kyodatsu Joutai (虚脱状態): State of lethargy, absolute bewilderment, mental numbness.

Kyokai (協会): Association, organization.

Meiji (明治): Government formed by dissident samurai, 08-09-1868 / 30-07-1930.

Monogatari (物語): Story.

Nihon (日本): Japan.

Sakoku (鎖国): Japan being closed off from the rest of the world, with the exception of the Dutch, who were allowed to trade. Literally translates to ‘national isolation’. Ended in 1853.

Samurai (侍): Japanese warrior.

SCAP: Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers.

Seppuku (切腹): Ritual suicide by disembowelment.

Shogun (将軍): Military general.

Shogunate / Bakufu (幕府): Military government.

Tatami (畳): Japanese straw floor coverings.

Touyou Kanji (当用漢字): Daily-use Kanji (superseded in 1981).

Wakon Yousai (和魂洋才): The Japanese ability to assimilate with Western technology, while also retaining their own culture and values. Emerged during the Meiji period in 1868.

WWI: World War I, 1914-1918. Because Japan chose the Allied side during the war, it got invited to the Versailles peace conference.

WWII: World War II, 1939-1945. Japan surrendered after two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on August 6th and August 9th 1945 respectively. The defeat of Japan and the dropping of the atomic bomb left a lasting impact on the population.

Zaibatsu (財閥): A large Japanese business conglomerate. They held great influence over Japan's economic and political policies until the end of World War II. Originated in the early Meiji period. Private companies branched out, with government help, into many different enterprises, including banks, which enabled them to monopolize a large portion of the Japanese economy. Literally translates to 'money clique'.

Title in Japanese: *Hiroshima kara Gojira e: Nihonjin kara mita Dainiji Taisengo no Eiga oyobi Bungaku ni okeru Nihon no Amerika Ka.*

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