

# **Envisioning Democracy**

## **— The Visual Transformation of Emperor Hirohito from War to Peace —**

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### **I. Introduction**

On August 15, 1945, the Japanese emperor, Hirohito, signaled the end of World War II to his people over a live radio broadcast recorded the previous evening. For the first time in history, his subjects listened to the “divine” voice of their emperor as he implored them to “pave the way for a grand peace for all generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable” in the wake of a brutal war that had decimated numerous cities and claimed the lives of millions throughout the globe.<sup>(1)</sup> Japan’s defeat in the Pacific War meant that it would become subject to the Allied Powers and the notorious Potsdam Declaration which outlined the conditions for Japan’s surrender. While some Japanese perceived their country’s capitulation as shameful and an aberration of historical continuity, others saw Japan’s defeat as the dawning of a new era, one in which they could regain the freedom and individual rights previously lost to them as a result of strict totalitarian rule embodied in such laws as the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 and other similar repressive government edicts. As the appointed Supreme Commander for the

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Allied Powers, American General Douglas MacArthur, and his literal army of occupation personnel descended upon the defeated nation of Japan, they faced many challenges ahead as they prepared for the daunting task of transforming a belligerent totalitarian government into a peaceful democratic nation.<sup>(2)</sup>

The transition for any nation from war to peace is often difficult, costly, and time-consuming. Colonel Charles L. Kades, a prominent member of the General Headquarters<sup>(3)</sup> of SCAP who later assisted in the creation of a new Japanese constitution, even remarked that “it is always more difficult to win the peace than to win the war, although winning the peace should be the true objective of war.”<sup>(4)</sup> In order to “win the peace” during the occupation of Japan, militarism needed to be eradicated from the nation per the requirements of the Potsdam Declaration and democracy needed to firmly take root in all social, political, and economic strata of Japanese society. During the Americans’ tenure as *de jure* rulers of Japan from 1945-1952, the promotion of democracy became increasingly more important in the Cold War that ensued between the United States and the U.S.S.R. Japan therefore became a new type of psychological battleground where political ideologies and propaganda replaced bombs and bullets as the methods of deliverance. As a result of the encroaching dangers of Soviet communism, and in order to eliminate the remaining vestiges of militarism in Japan, the Allies sought to rapidly democratize the image and persona of Emperor Hirohito, transforming him from a symbol of imperial military power to one of a passively democratic monarch. This visual transformation was greatly aided by the constant coverage of His Imperial Majesty in the major Japanese newspapers of the time which were published in English as well as Japanese. Therefore, the visual make-over of Hirohito signaled the democratization of Japan and unofficially, and possibly without any liaison with SCAP, became an important propaganda tool for GHQ to assist in the democratization of the Japanese people during the Occupation period.

The purpose of this essay is not to reinterpret the post-war role of the emperor in Japanese society and international politics, nor is it an assessment of the decisions made by GHQ during the Occupation of Japan. Instead, the

primary purpose of this paper is to examine and analyze how the media's use of imagery and visual depictions of the emperor paralleled, whether purposefully through self-censorship or as a result of GHQ and the Japanese government's media censorship laws, SCAP's official desire to maintain the emperor's imperial status as the "symbol" of the Japanese people by presenting him as a democratic figure of society. Surely the media censorship laws played an important role in the selection of newspaper articles, editorials, and photographs. As a result, it is clear through daily newspapers of the time, that certain "buzzwords" like *democracy*, *women's rights*, *unionization*, and other such verbal agents of American Occupation objectives permeated the daily life of the Japanese people in print. In addition, the media fostered a growing fascination with the formerly obscure Emperor Hirohito, who became a highly publicized celebrity monarch. His life played out a subtle democratic drama as his various travels, audiences with commoners and laborers, and everyday domestic life graced the pages of *The Mainichi Daily* and *Nippon Times*.

The second purpose of this paper is to examine how the media, whether as a result of official government censorship or through self-censorship, assisted in easing the often difficult transformation from war to peace. Due to the unique relationship between the Japanese emperor and his loyal subjects, a pacified imperial figure highly visualized and published in the mainstream media which reached a broad audience must be analyzed and assessed for its contribution to preserving peace throughout the country. Although the author of this essay is not a media expert, perhaps some questions may be raised as to how media portrayals of contemporary people and events contribute to state propaganda, whether officially or unofficially acknowledged as such. Additionally, it is regrettable that no single scholar can completely achieve an all encompassing study of any subject, it would be most helpful to also employ a greater understanding of collective and cognitive psychology to better analyze how readers received such images and media portrayals of the emperor and his imperial family and how they might have processed and understood the "coded" images and messages in the newspapers. Ultimately, the author hopes to raise

some hitherto unexamined questions regarding media portrayals of the emperor and the imperial family in regards to the GHQ democratization effort during the Occupation of Japan from 1945-1952.

Some American scholars have examined psychological warfare during the Pacific War but few have extended such a study to the Occupation of Japan, arguably one of the most transformative periods of Japanese history outside of the period of rapid modernization during the Meiji Era. John Dower's *War Without Mercy* is an exceptional study of Japanese and American race relations during the war.<sup>(5)</sup> In his impressive study he attributes the savagery of the Pacific theatre of operations to the propagandized "race war" waged on both sides of the Pacific between Americans and Japanese. Although propaganda is thoroughly discussed in the context of foreign diplomacy and wartime mobilization, race relations during the war remain the primary emphasis of the book. Another scholar, Allison B. Gillmore, in her thorough study of American psychological warfare operations during the Pacific campaign entitled *You Can't Fight Tanks with Bayonets* greatly advanced psychological warfare studies by painstakingly detailing the history, organization, missions and operations, and various strategies of the Allied Powers from 1942-1945.<sup>(6)</sup> However, due to the difficulties of applying the terms "psychological warfare" to periods of peace, like the American Occupation of Japan, few studies have transcended the boundaries of the battlefield and analyzed the policies and operations of SCAP and GHQ as "peacetime psychological warfare."<sup>(7)</sup> U.S. Army Brigadier General Bonner F. Fellers, chief aide to General MacArthur and former commander of the Psychological Warfare Branch<sup>(8)</sup> of the American forces in the Pacific during the war, used this statement in reference to a Japanese independent film production about the emperor during the seven years of peaceful occupation following the war. If one so closely affiliated with both the wartime psychological warfare apparatus as well as MacArthur's post-war occupation forces could view a film as a contributive agent for American propaganda, then perhaps it is time for scholars to also examine more closely the official and unofficial propaganda and those elements of Japanese society that contributed to the American democratic

message during the Allied Occupation of Japan.

## **II. American and Japanese Psychological Warfare and Propaganda**

In order to discover how GHQ utilized psychological warfare during the Occupation, one must first understand how both Americans and Japanese employed psychological warfare on both sides of the Pacific during the war. There are two key elements to creating an effective psychological warfare campaign in the form of propaganda. One must first examine the American military forces' use of propaganda during the war as they would often refer to it during the Occupation as a template for producing and employing psychological warfare. Secondly, the mobilization of the Japanese armed forces and subsequent military campaigns was effective because of the symbiotic relationship between society and the state. Public support of government wartime programs in Japan was largely successful because of the initiative of various individuals and patriotic groups who helped produce and sustain propaganda campaigns in conjunction with the government of course, but also independently as well. Therefore, during the Occupation of Japan, American efforts to democratize Japan were often supplemented by Japanese citizens and corporations who, whether willingly or not, assisted in the American propaganda campaign to democratize Japanese society.

As a starting point, Allison Gilmore's *You Can't Fight Tanks with Bayonets* provides a solid study of U.S. wartime psychological efforts, organization, mission, goals, and overall effectiveness. Considering that many of those prominent military figures like Brigadier General Bonner Fellers, who commanded the PWB of the SWPA theatre of operations during the war, later became high-ranking members of MacArthur's personal staff or section heads of GHQ, much of the knowledge gained from their wartime operations assisted in the administration of Japan.<sup>(9)</sup> Although Gilmore's study primarily focused on the organizational and operational aspects of wartime psychological warfare, many of the strategies and tactics developed during the military campaigns could be adapted to a post-war occupation setting.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the American psychological warfare operatives was their inability to understand the “enemy.” Bonner Fellers recognized the difficulties that culture, history, and language posed prior to the war when he published *The Psychology of the Japanese Soldier* in 1935 while attending the Command and General Staff School (CGSS) in Leavenworth, Kansas. Although his research and analysis was amateurish and speculative at best, it proved important as a foundation for his later appointment as commander of PWB during the war. After a few years of conducting psychological warfare operations, the Americans gradually increased their knowledge of Japanese social psychology, culture, and language through *Nisei* interpreters and captured Japanese prisoners of war. During the occupation, this information became valuable to the upper echelons of MacArthur’s GHQ who continued to parlay with Japanese politicians over political, economic, and social reforms.

Additionally, the Americans developed a highly organized strategy of psychological warfare. They employed four categories of propaganda: divisive, subversive, enlightenment, and despair. Divisive propaganda was originally intended to divide the Japanese armed services by exploiting inter-service rivalry in addition to dividing enlisted-officer relations. Subversive propaganda focused on eroding the enemy’s confidence in its leaders, national goals, and mythical destiny. However, Bonner Fellers was quick to omit any reference to the emperor in this type of propaganda for fear that it would incite greater fanaticism amongst the Japanese soldiers who fought in his name. Enlightenment propaganda was aimed at educating the enemy about the real strategic and material state of the war as well as the enemy they encountered on the battlefield. Finally, propaganda of despair was meant to create fear and doubt amongst the combatants by convincing them that Japan was actually losing the war.<sup>(10)</sup> These four categories formed the core of Fellers’ psychological warfare strategy and as Gilmore attempts to demonstrate in her study, proved useful in winning the “mind war” against the Japanese in the Pacific.

The four categorized strategies of propaganda and their goals as discussed in Gilmore’s study prove the most useful for the study of psychological warfare

during the U.S. Occupation of Japan. One could easily adapt her analysis of the PWB operations to a peaceful occupation by altering slightly the details of each of the four propaganda categories to emphasize the political, economic, and social realities of post-war Japan rather than military strategies. Divisive propaganda during the Occupation, for example, focused on the division between the former wartime militarists, ultra-nationalists, and policy-makers and the helpless, and sometimes victimized, members of Japanese society. A good example of this strategy was SCAP's decision to "drive a wedge" between the militarists and the emperor to absolve the latter of war responsibility and to transfer the guilt solely to those in charge of enacting policies and executing the war.<sup>(11)</sup> Subversive propaganda during the Occupation acted in a similar way. As Americans ushered in democracy as the ideological model all Japanese should adopt, they sought to erode the people's confidence in their former leadership, state-sponsored Shinto, and even the emperor as a divine being. Enlightenment propaganda was perhaps the most pervasive form during the Occupation as the Americans constantly bombarded the Japanese with information on how to create a new democracy and act responsibly as democratic citizens in the post-war global order. This became increasingly important as the ideological battles of the Cold War flared up between the United States and the Soviet Union's "global" communist vision. Finally, propaganda of despair was hardly ever utilized during the occupation for two primary reasons. First, the Japanese were already in a state of despair and therefore everyday life acted as its own despairing propaganda on behalf of the occupiers who offered a better vision of the world under their tutelage. Secondly, the Americans needed to uplift the Japanese and rebuild their confidence in order to reorient them politically, economically, and socially. As a result, what was formerly propaganda of despair during the war became propaganda of hope, as the Allies and newspapers constantly portrayed an alternative future for Japan that was more optimistic than pessimistic.

Although the fighting ended in 1945, the valuable lessons the Americans learned during the war allowed them to continue their psychological operations against the Japanese as occupiers, albeit in a modified fashion. Newspapers,

press releases and published statements, occupation reforms, educational movies, films, and propaganda assumed the role of the once valuable leaflet that American pilots dropped over theatres of operation during the war. From an institutional perspective the Americans possessed the knowledge and tools to continue their efforts to democratize the Japanese people through propaganda and persuasion, but their efforts would have been futile without the enthusiastic response of Japanese society. As a result, it is also important to take into account how Japanese propagandists mobilized the citizenry for war, maintained relative psychological control over the people, and then transitioned from war to peace, providing valuable propaganda for democratization independent of SCAP and GHQ. Although there are limited resources regarding Japanese psychological warfare and propaganda in English, Barak Kushner's recent book *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda* provides a valuable study of Japanese social efforts to produce propaganda in support of national wartime goals.

In *Thought War*, Barak Kushner examined the production, dissemination, and consumption of Japanese wartime propaganda from a social perspective. One of the most important goals of his book was to “demonstrate that the Japanese populace in general were active participants and not mere followers of their government officials and military commanders” in the production and consumption of wartime propaganda and other military policies during the Pacific War.<sup>(12)</sup> As a result, Kushner contributes to the greater study of propaganda and psychological warfare by shifting the standard analysis from the state and its propaganda organs to the private citizen and proactive individuals. Throughout his study he reveals how a responsive Japanese population enthusiastically supported state generated propaganda and in many cases contributed to the greater effort of creation and dissemination. The media, entertainment industry, and even advertisement agencies willingly assisted the state in its efforts to unite the home front with the battlefield through propaganda.<sup>(13)</sup> Kushner takes this argument further from political control by specifically claiming that “the entire propaganda structure was grounded outside of the government.”<sup>(14)</sup> As he later examines, this became important during the Occupation because the Japanese



people responded to American democratization efforts in much the same way as they responded to the wartime propaganda of Imperial Japan.

The media and mass culture figured prominently in the production of effective Japanese propaganda. According to Kushner, Japanese propaganda relied heavily on mass culture during the 1930s, specifically the media and emerging new technologies that allowed for easier dissemination and a more effective means of delivering the intended message to the public.<sup>(15)</sup> Therefore, by the time the Americans arrived in 1945, the Japanese people were already conditioned, according to Kushner, to interpret various messages transmitted through the media. Many of the press releases to the media by SCAP and various articles were intentionally created to applaud the virtues of democracy or announce the progress of reform in Japan. As a result, GHQ played an active role within media channels to promote their desired message among the populace. The Americans even went so far as to employ, rather than purge, former wartime propagandists such as Koyama Eizo, who actively assisted the imperial government during the war.<sup>(16)</sup> However, the Americans did not wholly dominate the dissemination of democratic propaganda to the Japanese media. Japanese individuals as well as the new government also turned to the media once again as they contributed articles, education pieces, political cartoons, and other messages meant to persuade the public to embrace democracy or at the very least used the opportunity of their new freedom of speech to voice previously suppressed opinions about the wartime government.

### **III. Visual Culture and Mass Media**

For the sake of brevity, this paper will not discuss the broader goals and implications of American propaganda during the Occupation period nor will it attempt to reconstruct the chronological developments of GHQ's effort to democratize the Japanese society through psychological warfare via propaganda. The primary goal is to analyze how the democratic message was delivered through newspaper media in the form of visual depictions of democracy at work. Like the spoken word, imagery often contains visual cues that represent various

ideas and concepts familiar to the receiver of the image. Therefore, it is important to outline some basic concepts created by an interdisciplinary field of study known as “visual culture.”

Although visual culture studies has hardly received its due attention from the field of history due to its post-modernist origins, its methodological approach to studying visual images and extracting “meaning” from what the eye sees is very useful when studying mass culture. In the case of this paper, media depictions of the emperor, the imperial family, Douglas MacArthur, and the U.S. military presence in Japan constitute the central focus from which visual culture and history converge through psychological warfare (propaganda). Visual culture complements the historical theory of studying propaganda by providing a more stable understanding of how recipients of visual cues contextualize what perceivers see and convert it into something with meaning in relation to their culture. As a result, propaganda in the form of newspaper images produced by either Americans or Japanese and accompanied by well-crafted headlines (and sometimes not so well crafted) maintains a certain cultural meaning that acts as a reference point from which the targeted audience may act or react to the message.

Roland Barthes, one of the most established scholars in the field of visual culture, explains that knowledge of writing and language is essential to creating meaning through images. Linguistic messages printed as text, which is true with almost all propaganda, usually accompanies the visually veiled message which is “connotational” and “denotational.”<sup>(17)</sup> What this basically means any given image conveys three messages to the viewer. The first is the linguistic text that usually explains something or acts as a reference point for the perceiver to understand the visual representation. The second message is usually the connoted visual cue Barthes refers to as the “coded iconic” or “signifier” which, in conjunction with the linguistic cue often produces the third message, or the most desirable meaning to be extracted from the entire production. This third message is referred to as the “non-coded iconic” or “signified” because it is usually the most important message conveyed that the producer expects the

recipient to contextualize. The “coded iconic” (signifier) is called this because its meaning is usually veiled in representative affiliations and is thus something of a subconscious cue to extract the greater meaning, or “non-coded iconic” (signified) of the overall image.<sup>(18)</sup> The result of Barthes’ methodology is an interpretative “reading” of the image based upon three messages of the image.

The interpretation of meaning from images by scholars is perhaps the greatest danger in constructing meaning from newspaper images and propaganda but when coupled with a historical analysis of the article/image, one can arrive at reasonable conclusions regarding the message. In the case of official state or institutionally sponsored propaganda, the message is often provided by the producer in order to identify its effectiveness following the operation. As for mass media such as newspapers and advertisements, the message is often apparent through the combination of the three messages: linguistic, signifier, and signified. However, the viewer must remain mindful that media depictions of various people, places, and events may not be overt propaganda produced expressly for psychological warfare purposes. Instead, these images and articles may unintentionally contribute to the cause of those interested in conveying a message via propaganda in the media. For the sake of this paper, when the intentions of the producer are unclear (newspapers, individuals, etc.), these messages will be referred to as “unofficial psychological warfare.” Likewise, the various press releases by General MacArthur, GHQ, the Civil Information and Education Branch (CIE), or his personal aides acting in an official capacity are referred to as “official psychological warfare.” Therefore, through a careful contextualization of various images and articles in Japanese newspapers during the initial stages of the Occupation, historians may elucidate coded messages that acted as “unofficial psychological warfare” on behalf of the American occupiers in the form of propaganda.

#### **IV. The Visual Democratization of Hirohito and the Imperial Family**

Following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan rapidly industrialized and

became a modern state by imitating the imperial powers of the West. Since that time, the emperor of Japan became a dominant figurehead in theory if not in practice, throwing back hundreds of years of isolation from the center of society and politics. The rise of the imperial monarchy began with Emperor Meiji and continued throughout the twentieth century until his grandson, Hirohito, came to power in 1926, merely a few years before the beginning of the Manchurian Incident in 1931. An imperial cult of personality evolved around the emperor who became more visible in the public sphere and eventually deified in the eyes of many of his subjects. Although Hirohito was rarely visualized in the print media prior to the war, dominating headlines coupled with rare public appearances maintained his virtual control over the people.

The image of the emperor, however, became a powerful icon for the Japanese. The government issued portraits of the sovereign to schools, factories, and various societies where it was hung in a central place and revered by school children, workers, and loyalists. In this manner, the emperor held court over the public and became the “all-seeing monarch who could dominate people through his sight.”<sup>(19)</sup> Propagandists carefully selected specific images that depicted the emperor as the unchallenged imperial authority of Japan. The image of Hirohito reviewing his troops as he rode upon his pure white horse bedecked from head to toe in fine military dress, complete with cords, medals, and white gloves became a typical depiction of the emperor during the war.<sup>(20)</sup> Such images denoted the authority and majesty of the emperor and reinforced the message to the people that Hirohito was the unchallenged sovereign ruler of the nation. The media, however, refrained from using photographs of the emperor during the war, especially when the war began to turn against Japan’s favor.

Once the war concluded, the emperor became much more visible in Japanese newspapers. When the Americans arrived, the headlines changed virtually overnight. Where the headlines previously called upon the people to resist the Americans at all costs and prepare to sacrifice themselves in the name of the emperor, they suddenly began to beseech the people to act with propriety, honor, and dignity and to offer the landing Allies no resistance. As GHQ settled

into the Dai-Ichi Insurance Building directly across from the imperial palace in Tokyo, the newspaper headlines became a passive vehicle for American democratization propaganda. As the Occupation period progressed, even the emperor underwent a subtle transformation and became the subject of “unofficial” democratization propaganda.

Until November 1945, Emperor Hirohito continued to wear his military uniforms during his still rare public appearances. The Occupation at this stage was well underway but still in its infancy as it began its mission to democratize Japan. On November 18, 1945, The *Nippon Times* ran a front page photograph of the emperor’s visit to worship at the Tama Imperial Mausoleum in Tokyo. In the photograph, Hirohito was shown in full military dress, as was standard during the war, walking in a military-like column followed by others in similar military dress, including Admiral Hisanori Fujita, the Grand Chamberlain to the emperor.<sup>(21)</sup> Although the linguistic cue of this photograph fails to express any particular message to its viewers, the connoted and denoted messages are quite clear. The emperor’s posture and dress military uniform crowded by several medals and honors, while walking as if marching at the head of a column all represent a military display (signifier). However, the signified message that results from this image is that the emperor is the head of the state as he leads his subjects and the leader of all of the armed forces because even a full admiral like Admiral Hisanori Fujita is a subordinate officer to the emperor. Whether this message was intended or not was unclear, but the overall message of the image convoked a shared reference point for the Japanese during the war, one that seemingly remained intact during the Occupation; the emperor remained the sovereign leader of Japan and the supreme commander of its military forces.

Merely a day prior to the emperor’s appearance in the newspapers at the Tama Imperial Mausoleum in full military splendor, another article was published that called for the emperor to abandon his martial wardrobe. A group of educators in Tokyo, concerned over MacArthur’s recent call for the Japanese to “completely eliminate militarism from Japan” banded together and “unanimously agreed that the pictures of the Emperor in military uniform . . . must be changed

immediately to a more peaceful appearance as the first step toward the real democratization of Japan.”<sup>(22)</sup> The article also stated that not only teachers were concerned over depictions of the emperor, but also that “many other leaders have already expressed their approval of the decision” as well, thus fortifying the idea that democratic leaders did not wear military uniforms in their official capacities as heads of state.<sup>(23)</sup> The concern for the image of the emperor was rectified when the newspaper looked back, one year later, on the many changes in Japan since the surrender of August 15, 1945 and noted immediately that one visibly apparent change was that the emperor “doffed his military uniform forever.”<sup>(24)</sup> Perhaps many of the changes came at the behest of the Allies as a result of a 16 March 1946 secret message sent from Washington to Tokyo in which Secretary of State Cordell Hull instructed SCAP that the “Emperor should demonstrate he is not divine and should mix more freely with foreigners and Japanese.” Likewise, Hull ordered that the “extreme measures to keep [*sic*] person of Emperor mysteriously distant from public should be abandoned.” Perhaps the most revealing sentence of the secret message for the sake of psychological warfare and propaganda stated that “any attempt to persuade the Emperor to participate in his own debunking should not be made known to the Japanese people.”<sup>(25)</sup> However, since mid-February of that year, Hirohito had already begun the first of what would become his imperial tours throughout the country that lasted beyond the end of the Occupation in 1952.

Hirohito’s personal advisors and strategists kept a close watch on the pulse of the American Occupation authorities. As many of the Allies, and even certain segments within Japanese society, began to call for the emperor to stand as a war criminal alongside the rest of the militarist leadership, Hirohito’s loyal coterie of advisors conferred with GHQ about finding a way of demonstrating the emperor’s humanity.<sup>(26)</sup> The imperial tours throughout Japan became the solution. For the media, the tours afforded a valuable opportunity to depict the emperor not only as a man, but also as a democratic head of state rather than an absolute monarch. Fortunately for GHQ, the media’s portrayals of Hirohito played perfectly into their plans to democratize Japan, and what better way to do so than to embody

democracy within the same figure whom the Japanese previously revered as a living deity?

The media headlines and photographs fit the psychological warfare paradigm in that the visual depictions of the emperor acted “unofficially” as divisive and enlightenment propaganda. They were divisive because they generally depicted the diminutive, “soft-spoken” emperor as an introverted scholar and kind-hearted caring patriarch of the nation. As enlightenment propaganda, the emperor created a valuable image of a benign democratic head of state that set an example for subordinate government leadership as well as for the rest of society. After all, he dressed like common people and even walked among them during his tours like no other emperor before. As enlightenment propaganda, the emperor embodied democracy as it should be emulated by the people. The democratic messages of the images and linguistic cues also attested to the democratization of the emperor.

Throughout much of 1946 and 1947 daily reports about the emperor and the imperial family found their way onto the front pages of the English and Japanese language newspapers in Japan. Photos of their majesties in action accompanied many of these articles. A 20 February 1946 front-page photo showed Hirohito standing in a crowd of common people in Kanagawa Prefecture. He wore a suit with a high collared shirt and a tie accented by a neatly worn fedora atop his head. The suit, hat, shirt and tie, and even his posture as he stood among the people represented various ideas to the common people.<sup>(27)</sup> The suit and hat showed that he was a gentleman, perhaps even a businessman or other important individual, and his willingness to stand rigid among a throng of disheveled onlookers signify that he was merely one man among the masses that day. If we refer back to the previous discussion regarding visual culture and the various messages, these visual cues act as the “coded-iconic” messages or “signifier” that represent basic ideas that lead the observer to the idea that the image is supposed to invoke. In this instance, that idea was that Hirohito was simply a man rather than a divine being as was evident by his very presence among the crowd and the fact that he wore similar clothes to many other Japanese citizens.

Gone were the days of the regal military uniform and the noble monarch upon a gallant white horse. This image signified that the emperor was more egalitarian than before, which according to the people, represented democracy as the Americans, especially MacArthur, so often referred.

Many other photographs followed throughout the remainder of 1946. The emperor always appeared in a suit and usually he was either seen wearing a hat or at least tipping it to the crowd of devoted spectators. *The Mainichi* produced a significant amount of imperial images during this period. During the 1947 New Year, *The Mainichi* displayed the emperor and empress in separate portraits beside one another. Although no linguistic cues accompanied these photos, the emperor appeared as he had throughout the previous year in a suit and tie posing stoically for the photo. The empress appeared in a *kimono* undistinguishable from any other Japanese woman.<sup>(28)</sup> The side-by-side, man-woman, husband-wife portrayal of their majesties along with their non-descript attire attested to the readers through the signifiers that the emperor and empress were equals and therefore more “democratic.” This would prove important a few months later when Japan adopted its new constitution in which women were finally given the right to vote and could participate in government and society as equally as men. When the new Constitution was commemorated in a grand ceremony on 3 May 1947, Hirohito again appeared before the public wearing a long jacket, high collar, and tie tipping his hat courteously and holding an umbrella over his head to prevent himself from becoming wet by the “drizzle” while standing in the midst of a cheering throng of people.<sup>(29)</sup> The linguistic cues of “new Constitution” and “effectuated” combined with the by now typical manner and appearance of the emperor acted as signifiers for the message that the emperor helped usher in the new democratic constitution and that it was effectuated because he himself was an egalitarian sovereign ruler. This last piece of “unofficial psychological warfare” acted as divisive propaganda because it demonstrated to the observers and readers of the newspaper that the emperor could not be a militarist or deviant totalitarian if he himself helped effectuate a new democratic constitution. The article played well into the Allied strategy



outlined in the Hull message the previous year.

Even as late as 30 May 1949, Hirohito continued to appear as the democratic monarch of Japan while conducting his imperial tours. When he appeared in Kyushu to inspect various institutions and industries, one stop figured prominently in the newspapers. Hirohito graciously visited one of Mitsui Corporation's collieries in Omuta City where "the Emperor changed into miner's clothing complete with cap-lamp."<sup>(30)</sup> The photo shows the emperor wearing a miner's coat with his suit and tie still visible beneath the lapels and topped by a hard hat with a light on it. Interestingly enough, he wore white gloves and he waved his hand in the air as he normally would tip his hat to the crowds. However, because he appeared inside a covered mine cart he was unable to extend his hat cordially as was his custom. Again, these photos demonstrated that the emperor was no longer a remote living deity. Instead, he was reduced to the level of the common working man (relatively despite the cleanliness of his attire and the white gloves) as he inspected the mines and walked among those who worked within them. Although the threat of war crimes trials and the calls for abdication were remote echoes of the early post-war period by 1949, the lasting legacy his tours imprinted was the transformation of the emperor from a wartime militarily clad monarch to a democratic leader of a pacifist nation.

## V. Conclusion

Although psychological warfare in the form of propaganda is generally devised to combat armies and help attain victory in wartime, converting and conquering the already vanquished enemy in peacetime through psychological warfare is just as important. However, in the case of Allied occupied Japan, an overt attempt to continuously propagandize the Japanese would have been counterproductive to American goals. American propaganda was often apparent in its various "official" forms but its usage was limited. Instead, "unofficial" propaganda like that of newspaper images, movies, and various other tools used to democratize the Japanese was more commonplace. These forms often proved more effective as they were produced not only by Americans, but also by the

Japanese themselves in consort with the Occupation authorities to help prepare and educate the common people about their new roles as citizens in a democratic nation. In many cases propaganda proved strategically effective as it delivered the intended message without the express recognition of the recipients. As intended by the various media restrictions resulting from GHQ and governmental censorship, the Japanese media was an extremely important agent for publicizing the progress of democracy in Japan, especially in reference to the emperor's place within society.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century mass media and mass culture has developed well beyond the capabilities of the 1940s. Newspapers, although still widely read among many educated readers, include many more visual images today than before. Additionally, the widespread consumption of advertising commercials, news media programs, and public broadcasting in both the United States and Japan conveys a multitude of messages to viewers in every household with a television. The internet has become the greatest disseminator of information in the modern era and as a result, internet users are consistently bombarded with visual images and linguistics cue as they peruse public and private websites. Although the greatest majority of these messages are aimed at persuading consumers to purchase various products and merchandise, propaganda continues to exist and is widely available through these media sources in order to deliver messages to viewers regarding the latest wars, political conflicts, and occupations existing through the world. Therefore, it is important for society to become more aware of the images that are produced and what they mean. What are the linguistic cues that denote certain ideas regarding a topic? What do the various images, colors, and visual layouts signify to observers? Finally, what is signified by all of these images and linguistic cues? The ultimate message is not as coded as we may think therefore we must "read" media images in order to understand the messages that are being transmitted to society.

## Notes

- (1) Robert J.C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p.248. For the entire radio broadcast by

- Emperor Hirohito to the citizens of Japan on August 15, 1945, refer to Appendix I of Butow's book.
- (2) The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers will hereby be abbreviated as SCAP for the remainder of this paper. In addition, Douglas MacArthur himself is often simply referred to as "the SCAP" or simply "SCAP."
  - (3) MacArthur's General Headquarters will hereby be abbreviates as GHQ for the remainder of this paper.
  - (4) Charles L. Kades, Papers of Charles L. Kades, 1948-1951. "Japan Policy", RG33, Box 1, Folder 2. "Correspondence, 1948-1951." MacArthur Memorial Library and Research Archives. Norfolk, VA.
  - (5) John Dower, *War Without Mercy*.
  - (6) Allison B. Gilmore, *You Can't Fight Tanks with Bayonets*.
  - (7) Bonner F. Fellers, Papers of Brigadier General Bonner F. Fellers. RG44a, Box 2, Folder 12. MacArthur Memorial Library and Research Archives. Norfolk, VA.
  - (8) The Psychological Warfare Branch will hereby be abbreviated as PWB for the remainder of this paper.
  - (9) The Southwest Pacific Area will hereby be abbreviated as SWPA.
  - (10) Allison B. Gilmore details each of these various categories in greater depth in her book, *You Can't Fight Tanks with Bayonets*, pp.6-7.
  - (11) John Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p.285.
  - (12) Barak Kushner, *Thought War*, p.3.
  - (13) Ibid., p.6.
  - (14) Ibid., p.14.
  - (15) Ibid., p.20
  - (16) Ibid., p.181.
  - (17) Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of Image," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, p.70.
  - (18) Ibid., p.71. In this paper the author will refer to the "coded iconic" and the "non-coded iconic" as the "signifier" and "signified" to alleviate any confusion by readers and make the argument more readable.
  - (19) Takeshi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, p.241.
  - (20) John Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p.332.
  - (21) "His Majesty at Tama," *Nippon Times*, 18 November 1945, p. 1.
  - (22) "Educators Want Emperor Out of Army Garb; Also Plan to Establish a Teacher's Union,"

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(23) Ibid.

(24) "Emperor Has Doffed Godliness, Army Garb and Come Down to Earth During Past Year," *Nippon Times*, 15 August 1945, p. 2.

(25) Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, GHQ/SCAP Top Secret Records. Vol. 7.

(26) Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p. 330.

(27) "Kanagawa Prefecture Visited," *The Mainichi*, 20 February 1946, p. 1.

(28) *The Mainichi*, 1 January 1947, p. 1.

(29) "New Constitution is Effectuated," *The Mainichi*, 4 May 1947, p. 1.

(30) "Emperor Inspects Kyushu Colliery," *The Mainichi*, 30 May 1949, p. 1.

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## Envisioning Democracy

### — The Visual Transformation of Emperor Hirohito from War to Peace —

#### 〈Summary〉

Caleb Sparks

In the field of U.S. Foreign Relations History, many scholars have focused their interpretative analyses on the U.S. occupation of Japan 1945-1952. Historical perspectives of this period varied from social histories examining the rise of women's rights to more standardized political histories with Douglas MacArthur's General Headquarters usually at the forefront of analysis. Likewise, the period of warfare prior to Japan's surrender has also received much attention from scholars across the historiographical spectrum. Few however, besides John Dower's *Embracing Defeat*, have sought to examine the continuity between the two historical periods in U.S.-Japanese foreign relations. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the larger study of this continuity where psychological warfare became a means of bridging the gap between war and peace.

Drawing on the larger historical body of literature from established scholars in the field like John Dower and Eiji Takemae whose works primarily focus on the role of GHQ in post-war Japan, this paper utilizes psychological warfare in the form of propaganda in the media as a primary mode of analysis. In order to establish a viable methodological basis for analysis, the paper discusses the recent contributions of Allison B. Gilmore and Barak Kushner. Gilmore's *You Can't Fight Tanks with Bayonets* provides a solid analysis of the U.S. psychological warfare campaign against the Japanese during WWII while Kushner's *Thought War* offers an alternative perspective of Japanese propaganda in the military and society. Therefore, this paper draws from their studies and seeks to adapt their modes of analysis to the period of post-war occupation,

examining several newspaper articles and images.

Historical analysis alone however, is insufficient for understanding the greater meaning of each article and image. As a result, the author of this paper referred to visual culture studies and theories in order to contextualize how various images and articles of the emperor acted as propaganda for the democratization of Japan. Democratization was perhaps the most important reform of GHQ and their message was often delivered to the common people of Japan via newspaper articles and images that contained encoded visual messages that referred them to the American democratic message. Whether officially sponsored by SCAP or even self-generated by the media and Japanese government, newspapers, movies, and other forms of media became information highways in regards to the democratic message and acted as a form of “peace-time psychological warfare.” Ultimately, this paper seeks to contribute to a greater study of psychological warfare during the U.S. Occupation of Japan.

Following the introduction, the paper examines the contributions of Gilmore and Kushner to the greater historiography of U.S. foreign relations. Section three draws on visual culture studies for an enhanced analysis of mass media textual and visual messages to the public 1945-1952. Finally, section four assembles several articles and images of Emperor Hirohito and analyzes the encoded messages contained within them that acted as propaganda for democratizing Japanese society and politics. The conclusion simply seeks to illuminate the broader implications and the need for understanding how psychological warfare and propaganda was utilized during the occupation period to democratize the Japanese people in much the same way as it was used to coerce Japanese soldiers and military leaders to submit to the American military during WWII.