Liberty and Domesticity: The Portrayal of Japanese Housewives in the 1948 Issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* during the Allied Occupation

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ABSTRACT

Analyzing images of Japanese housewives from the daily issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* in 1948, the paper finds that the portrayals align with the shifting propagandas of the SCAP—initially, the emancipation of women via the 1947 Constitution of Japan, and then the promotion of domesticity due to the Cold War in 1948. For example, while the newspaper does show housewives voting (a showcase of liberation), it excludes images either of women in active movements or of female politicians. Instead, many images depict the housewives' nurturing and subservient side, and reinforce their passivity, obscuring other narratives of women in the country. The Japanese housewives are also portrayed as inferior, most especially in comparison with their American counterparts, showcasing the West's superiority over Japan as an occupying power.

Keywords: Japanese Housewives, Pacific Stars and Stripes, Allied Occupation period, SCAP, liberation, domesticity, Right of Suffrage, Labor Standard Law, Article 14, Article 24

The Portrayal of Japanese Women

Studies concerning the representation of Japanese women in media during the occupation of Japan are substantial. While most use Japanese women's magazines as their primary material (Ford, Voli, Honeycutt Jr. and Casey 1998; Madden, Caballero, and Matsukubo 1986; Hong, Muderrisoglu and Zinkhan 1986; Matsuda 2012; Ochiai 1997; Rosenberger 1996), many often show the Japanese, albeit sometimes Western-influenced, perspective. For example, Hiroko Matsuda (2012) and Emiko Ochiai (1997) examine the portrayals of Japanese women based on the concepts of democracy and the influence of magazines on the construction of the ideal woman. Matsuda reiterates the role of American women as models for their Japanese counterparts, while Ochiai explores Japanese women's adoration of the ideals of Western beauty and their impact on the creation of the image of a housewife. Others focus on the relationship between the media and the policies, specifically those from the Japanese state. Nancy Rosenberger (1996) finds inconsistencies between such policies and the representation of women in Japanese women's magazines in the 1980s and 1990s. Her findings show that the media did not necessarily embody the goal of the state, and that they contradicted one another.

Despite this rich literature, studies have yet to deal with the representation of Japanese women from the lens of the policy makers, specifically during the Allied Occupation of Japan (1945–1952). Japan, after its defeat in the Pacific War (1941–1945), came under US governance, with General Douglas MacArthur becoming the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP).[1] Shortly, their General Headquarters (GHQ) was established and became the main office overseeing the occupation. In this respect, the closest related literature is the work of Lisa Yoneyama (2005), who analyzes Japanese women and the concept of liberation based on the US media's coverage of Japan in newspapers and other media. Yoneyama (885–910) uses the concept of "hypervisibility" to describe how the US used media to blatantly showcase its contribution to Japanese women's liberation, consequently overlooking their earlier active involvement wherein they

fought for their rights. "It is difficult to overlook a remarkable contraction in the US media's coverage of Japanese women's political participation" (898). However, Yoneyama's work was based on media outside Japan which, for all its insights, do not entail a direct representation of the SCAP's portrayal of Japanese women. By contrast, this paper looks at the representation of Japanese women from the lens of the SCAP's own newspaper, *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, which was published in Tokyo, Japan.

This paper argues that the representations of Japanese housewives in the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* manifest varying, even conflicting, tendencies. On the one hand, very few housewives are shown practicing the new policies, specifically the right to vote. On the other hand, multiple images depict their passivity, reinforcing the ideology of domesticity that highlights their subservience and role in care work, and helping legitimize the SCAP's propaganda as saviors and superior mentors of (supposedly inferior) Japanese women.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first section discusses the methodology and framework, and then gives background information on the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*. The second gives an overview of the SCAP's emancipation and Cold War propagandas that affected Japanese women. The third section covers the analysis and discussion of the paper, and ends with a short summary and conclusion. The focus on the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* arises from the following reasons: Japan's new constitution, heavily influenced by the SCAP, was promulgated in November 1947—meaning the policies were newly in effect by 1948; also, it was shortly around 1948 when the "reverse course" transpired. As such, one can determine if and to what extent in which such initiatives are reflected in the newspaper. Content analysis is used to codify the images, allowing easier organization based on their themes. Lastly, although the 1948 issues also feature other photos of Japanese women (Rosario 2020; 2021), this paper focuses only on those of the housewives. There were 291 daily issues in *Pacific Stars and Stripes* in 1948, which yielded 167 images of Japanese women, with 36 depicting housewives. This paper also uses the articles that accompany the images to supply additional context and information on the person/s depicted.

Gender, Power, and Postcolonial Theory

The relationship between the SCAP and Japan can be discussed through the analytics of gender, power, and postcolonial theory. Joan Wallach Scott (1986) notes that "gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (1067), and adds that "gender and power construct each other" (1073). In and through gender, "political power has been conceived, legitimated, and criticized" (Yoneyama 2005, 298). Meanwhile, Mohanty (2003, 67) explains that a postcolonial relationship is where "legal, economic, religious, and familial structures are treated as phenomena to be judged by western standards." She argues that Western feminism has a habit of treating third-world women as one group with similar experiences of oppression. Similarly, the SCAP's "liberation" of Japanese women simply treated the latter as one oppressed entity and imposed policies to improve their lot. The Right of Suffrage is significant in this regard. By granting Japanese women emancipation and restructuring Japan's traditional family system, the SCAP validated its stay in the country as liberators, and asserted and showed its supremacy, not only in Japan, but all over the world.

Furthermore, this paper takes off from Andrada Fatu-Tutoveanu and Mara Marginean's (2011) study on Romania in the 1940s and 1950s. They look at the representations of women within the Soviet-controlled press, identify similar patterns, and argue that there is a "huge discrepancy" between the ideals and the implementation of the Soviet Union's policies on reconstructing women's identities. Analysis of these portrayals shows how women faced the "triple burden of performing professional, political, and domestic tasks" (2011, par. 5.1). "Professional" implies a female workforce; "political" refers to participation in a space traditionally reserved for men; and "domestic" suggests how women are still bound by their responsibilities in the household. This multiplication of roles also occurred in Japan during the Allied Occupation. Japanese women were "liberated" and given access to the political arena through voting. At the same time, the ideology of Cold War domesticity compelled them to continue exercising their responsibilities at home. In the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* then, there is some

discrepancy between the ideals of liberation and their implementation, since majority of the images comprise Japanese housewives doing domestic chores.

Pacific Stars and Stripes

In 1945, the SCAP Far Eastern Command started publishing and freely distributing *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, an unofficial military daily newspaper, to give up-to-date news to the Allied forces and their families stationed along the Pacific area. The newspaper had two missions:

1. Bring DOD [Department of Defense] personnel and their dependents the same international, national, and regional news and opinion from commercial sources available to newspapers throughout [stet] the United States. This news makes possible the continued intelligent exercise of the responsibilities of citizenship by DOD personnel while they serve away from home. It helps their morale and readiness by dispelling rumor and by keeping them in touch with aspects of life in the United States while they live in unfamiliar surroundings;
2. Provide applicable US government, DOD, command, and local news and information, which improve individual capability [stet] for mission accomplishment and brings a sense of joint mission purpose to the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps personnel operating together to carry out the US defense mission overseas. (Moultrie 1990, 2–3)

At one point, *Pacific Stars and Stripes* had a circulation of 40,000 to 60,000 copies and reached as high as around "200,000 a day during the Vietnam War (1955-1975)" (Messinger 1986). Today, the newspaper is still published from Tokyo, Japan. *Pacific Stars and Stripes*' then marketing staff, Elena Sugiyama, estimated that the combined circulation in Japan, Korea, and Guam was roughly similar to that during the Occupation period.[2] Its writers were part of the military or hired civilians under the supervision of the SCAP. Under the DOD, it was given editorial independence, but

it was also said to be heavily censored by the military (Moultrie 1990; cf. Elmore 2010). The newspaper was the only medium known to be under the jurisdiction of the army among SCAP-related media, and was considered unique; frontline soldiers themselves wrote many of its articles, and it had an unusual layout. For example, its spreadsheet included random images, mostly of enticing (mostly White) women, to fill its spaces. At any rate, with *Pacific Stars and Stripes* operating under the SCAP, it is reasonable to assume that the newspaper reflected that institution's agenda.

Historical Background: Japanese Women as "Victims of Patriarchy"

Before the occupation of Japan by the Allied Powers, as early as the Edo period (1603–1868) a period characterized by a caste system and Confucianism, the government encouraged men to treat women as inferiors (Sievers 1983). When Japan underwent a rapid self-imposed Westernization during the *Meiji* period (1868–1912), women were legally required to be subservient, not only to the emperor but also to their husbands. It was then that the discourse of *ryōsai kenbo*, meaning "good wife, wise mother," emerged (Shizuko 2013). While *ryōsai kenbo* only became popular with the upper class, it still became recognized as an official state ideology (Shizuko 2013; Uno 1993; Ohinata 1995). Similarly, in the middle of the *Shōwa* period during the Pacific War (1941–1945), the government mandated dual roles for women—mothers and laborers—as a form of service to the state (Miyake 1991). Because men went to war, a labor shortage ensued, resulting in single women becoming laborers, not only in the textile industry but also in heavy industries. Married women were incentivized to serve the country by being the mothers of future soldiers. Those who were unable to comply were given higher taxes.

Americans saw the Japanese as enemies because of the war. However, according to Shibusawa (2006), opinion shifted as the former slowly fraternized with the latter. The SCAP took advantage of this and presented Japanese women and children as vulnerable "victims of patriarchy"

(Yoneyama 2005, 892), specifically by the traditional family structure of Japan known as *ie*. According to Helen Moscicki (1944, 19), a Western woman, Japanese women were "not regarded as a person" by Japanese law and "marriage is her only career unless she becomes a 'geisha.'" The absence of the Right of Suffrage and gender policies within the household gave Japanese women their "unhappiest woman in the world" image (Moscicki 1994; cf. Yoneyama 2005). They were generally viewed by and in the West as helpless and inferior. They were "constituted as passive victims of male-dominant militarism and the devastations of war who were liberated as a result of the nation's defeat and the postwar occupation" (Yoneyama 2005, 892).

Female Emancipation in SCAP Policies and the 1947 Constitution

Along with the implementation of democracy, the SCAP conducted major reforms, including the revision of the old Constitution of Japan to establish the 1947 Constitution (The Constitution of Japan n.d.), which included policies for Japanese women. By granting them freedom to vote—among other policies—the SCAP portrayed itself as their liberators from a patriarchal society (Koikari 2002, 14). The SCAP also promoted their political participation as part of its success in restructuring and rehabilitating the country. "Japanese women's political liberation…showcased the success of occupation policy to the international community" (Yoneyama 2005, 887). There are several women-related policies in the 1947 Constitution: Right of Suffrage, Labor Standard Law, and Articles 14 and 24. The Fundamental Law of Education is excluded because in the newspaper, none of the images show Japanese housewives in an academic context.

Right of Suffrage

The Japanese had little to no involvement with the creation of Japan's 1947 Constitution, as it was a secret venture by the SCAP (Koikari 2002). As part of its reforms and demands, and through the revision of the election law in 1945, later included in the Constitution as Article 15, women were granted

the right of suffrage. The following year, for the first time, "13,760,000 out of 21,500,000" Japanese women voted, while "39" Japanese women were immediately elected in the Diet (Loftus 2013, 46; cf. Hastings 1996). As mentioned earlier, the SCAP took credit for the emancipation of women, despite their having a hand in this policy. Shortly after the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration in July 1945, Japanese women renewed their struggle for suffrage, taking their demands to the streets.

Labor Standard Law

In the same year, the Labor Standard Law (or Labor Standard Act) was also implemented. Article 4 cites "equal wages for men and women" (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers 1949, 872). Women were also guaranteed maternity leaves before and after childbirth if they wished. However, the other articles of the policy still consider women as delicate, somewhat contradicting the SCAP's emancipation narrative. For example, they were allowed to have menstrual leaves, but were banned from working the night shift (Takeuchi 2017, 135).

The State Protection of Women

While suffrage helped women fight for their political rights more openly, the revision of the Meiji Constitution, which affected Japan's family structure and gender equality was a more sensitive issue, partly because of the traditional ideology of *ryōsai kenbo* and the *ie* system. Both set expectations for Japanese women (Kaneko 1995). For instance, marriage had more to do with duty and responsibility to the family than with feelings (Yoshizumi 1995). When a woman enters her husband's family, she adopts his surname, and is expected to bear a male child, and must be an obedient wife and daughter-in-law. If she is, for any reason, unable to fulfill any of these roles, she is often divorced, regardless of her feelings.

Beate Gordon, a civilian working for the SCAP as an interpreter and the only woman in MacArthur's team, was tasked to draft articles on women's rights. Two of her proposed provisions were included in the

final 1947 constitution: Article 14, which stipulates that there should not be any form of discrimination among the Japanese, regardless of sex, among others; and Article 24, which gives women rights on par with their husbands, especially pertaining to family and marriage matters.

Ironically, Japanese women received the so-called Japanese Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) much earlier than their Western counterparts, but this label is a misnomer. The articles were written by Gordon, not with the American ERA in mind, but in consideration of the state protection of women (Takeuchi 2017). Gordon (1997, 108), who grew up in Japan before moving to the US, states, "I tried to imagine the kinds of changes that would most benefit Japanese women, who had almost always married men chosen for them by their parents, walked behind their husbands, and carried their babies on their backs. Husbands divorced wives just because they could not have children. Women had no property rights."

Gender and Democratization

Many scholars argue that the emancipation narrative of Japanese women harbored a greater agenda: democratization (Koikari 2002; Yoneyama 2005). However, "[a]lthough MacArthur is known to have not been particularly keen on women's equal rights or feminisms, the US media presented Japanese women's liberation and enfranchisement primarily as his accomplishments" (Yoneyama 2005, 893). On 21 June 1946, MacArthur gave a speech and applauded the first Diet-elected women, crediting the "powerful appeal of the democratic idea and to the enthusiasm with which Japanese women are discarding the age-old bonds of convention which have been so long denied them the fundamental democratic right to participate in the communal affairs beyond the home" (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, Government Section 1949, 752).

Thus, as early as 1946, MacArthur presented the new status of Japanese women as a by-product of democratization. However, he also commended women for not sacrificing "the important position of women in the home," and "strongly cautioned the women against the temptation

to form a women's bloc to influence legislation" (752). For MacArthur, elected women should not allow their new roles to compromise their roles as mothers and wives; and that they should use their newly acquired position as an extension of their familial role, instead of fighting for equal rights with men. Thus, while Japanese women were being urged to embrace democracy, they were also being asked to continue doing their duties at home. Women's liberation is not exactly equated to democracy, but that was how the SCAP promoted democratization. In many ways, the persistence of traditional gender ideology foreshadowed the SCAP's "reverse course."

The "Reverse Course"

Because of the brewing Cold War in 1947, a war between the United States and Soviet Union, the SCAP decided to "reverse course" in 1948 (Dower 1999). The occupation policy changed from "democratization and demilitarization" to "rehabilitation of Japanese economy because of antagonism against communism and social ideology emerging" (Kobayashi 2004, 52). "Occupation authorities instituted a series of reactionary measures to contain the spread of radical democracy, including the 'red purge,' remilitarization, the armed suppression of Korean ethnic schools, the release of A-class war criminals, and a ban on the general strike" (Yoneyama 2005, 898).

According to John Dower (1999, 271), the first instance of the "reverse course" happened after MacArthur "reversed [the] occupation labor policy withdrawing the right to strike from public employees" in 1948. But as early as 1947, the SCAP already started putting a lid on their "liberation." MacArthur canceled a strike spearheaded by Japanese women the day before it was scheduled. MacArthur's stance on women's issues has already been mentioned through his encouragement to neglect their duties at home. Furthermore, despite the SCAP's claim on women's new status, the book, *Occupation of Japan: Policy and Progress* (Department of State, United States 1946)—which contains extensive information on the planned reconstruction of Japan—had no dedicated portion to women, who were sparsely

mentioned. It was published by the US government, composed of the Allied forces' policies, plans, correspondences, and documents that detail reforms in collaboration with the Japanese government. Thus, the prioritization of Japanese women's liberty was apparently a pretense. The Cold War did not only bring the shift in goals but also reinforced a traditional gender ideology—men as breadwinners and women as housewives—in Japan (Ochiai 1997; May 2008; Takeuchi 2017). The "means for implementing American Cold War domesticity ideology were the official 'liberation' policies for Japanese women" (Takeuchi 2017, 5). Takeuchi also refers to the SCAP's announcement (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, Government Section 1949, 741), which states the "emancipation of the women of Japan through their enfranchisement—that, being members of the body politic, they may bring to Japan a new concept of government directly subservient to the well-being of the home." Takeuchi (2017, 5–6) discusses that the SCAP also promoted the ideal American housewife, who is a "home manager" and surrounded by "newly electrified, scientific kitchen and appliances, leading a rational, efficient lifestyle—and presented them as a pathway to Japanese women's liberation." Likewise, Naoko Shibusawa (2006, 46) states that "Japanese women were being 'uplifted' to do American-style housework—which was made easier by 'modern conveniences.'" Moreover, promoting women as housewives did not only safeguard the notion of the democratic nuclear family but also opened job opportunities for men (May 2008, 4). Japanese women were asked to do their duties at home to give way for the men returning from the war. In many ways then, it can be said that the "reverse course" was already predetermined, and later policies were simply manifestations of an existing ideology.

Meanwhile, for Vera Mackie (2003), the existence of the new policies, and the promotion of Cold War family ideology and domesticity among Japanese women was a paradox. "The identity of the housewife proved to be a contradictory" (Mackie 2003, 132), and their involvement in movements—participating as wives and mothers—was "one of the paradoxes of that period that the forces of political economy and familial

ideology increasingly pushed women into an identification with the domestic sphere as housewives, while the legal changes of that time removed official obstacles to their activities as citizens in the public, political sphere" (122–23).

The Representation of Japanese Housewives

This history—the portrayal of Japanese women's emancipation and the promotion of Cold War domesticity—must be kept in mind when examining images of Japanese housewives in the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes*. There were 167 photographs of women in the newspaper for that year, and 21.56 percent—36 out of 167—portray Japanese housewives. Below is the table which summarizes the results of the analysis.

TABLE 1: Summary of Results Juxtaposing the Policies for Women in the 1947 Constitution and Images of Japanese Housewives in the 1948 Issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes*

Represented in the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* (1948)	**Right of Suffrage**	**Labor Standard Law**	**Articles 12 and 24**	**Other Images**
Yes (Total = 21.56%)	Voters (1.2%)	Working Housewives (Teacher and Home Business) (5.39%)	Japanese wives portrayed side-by-side with husbands (4.199%)	Housewives strictly taking care of their children or doing household chores and errands (10.78%)
No	Movements Female politicians	Traditional male professions	Discern equality within the household	

Note: The author created the table.

1. For the Right of Suffrage, while a couple of women are shown to be voting, there is a lack of images of female politicians and Japanese women's participation in women's movements. Majority of the images of housewives show them doing household chores.
2. For the Labor Standard Law, while there are working women among the 167 images, the teacher, who was described that she was working based on her own choice, was the only working housewife explicitly

stated in the newspaper. However, her decision to teach had nothing to do with the Labor Standard Law nor with the SCAP.

3. For Articles 14 and 24, while women are shown alongside their husbands, it is difficult to discern equality within the household from the images alone.
4. The other images which did not completely fit the policies where Japanese housewives portrayed as caretakers of their children and household. These images are equally important as majority of them constituted the newspaper's portrayal of Japanese women's domesticity.

The Apolitical Japanese Woman

Women's political participation constituted three out of the 167 images of Japanese women, and only two clearly depict housewives. The photos below (Figures 1 and 2) show them carrying their children while practicing their right to vote. Both images reinforce the goal of the SCAP: to showcase its capability to grant Japanese women suffrage—but, at the same time, without eliminating their roles as home makers. The paucity of voting images dovetails with the "reverse course" agenda.

Figure 1: A Japanese Woman Votes (Image from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 3 October 1948, p. 16. Courtesy of Stars and Stripes, All Rights Reserved).

Figure 2: Japanese Woman Exercises Her Right of Suffrage (Image from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*. 5 September 1948, p. 17. Courtesy of Stars and Stripes, All Rights Reserved).

Indeed, the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* show neither Japanese women engaging in a contemporaneous movement nor being elected as female legislators. As mentioned, several Japanese women were active both at home and in public. They had their own federation and were involved in several initiatives such as family-support and resource-generation activities before and after the Pacific War (Loftus 2013). Prior to the Allied occupation of Japan, Japanese women, especially those with access to education and/or career opportunities, had been actively fighting for their rights. These women, particularly the upper and middle classes, also had their own definition of liberation—from the right of suffrage to state protection, and economic liberation through wage labor (Takeuchi 2017). Therefore, the SCAP's narrative as their liberator discredits Japanese women's own narrative. In addition, the Women's Army Corps (WAC) did promote the SCAP's ideals, although they had their own pro-women vision.

All in all, the SCAP's "initiatives came from… particularly highly educated upper- and middle-class American [WAC] and Japanese women, who together created the occupation's policies for Japanese women (except suffrage) by forming a de facto… alliance" (Takeuchi 2017, 114). Their

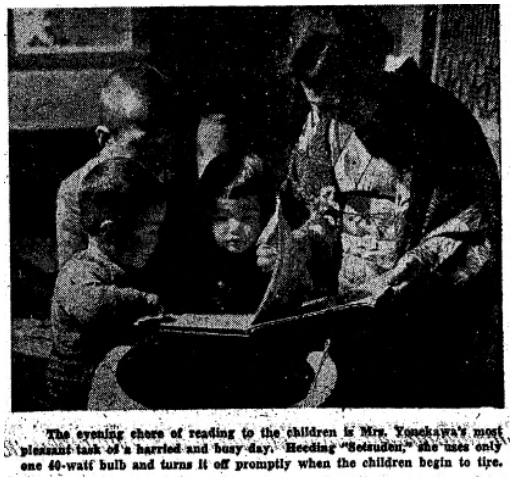
collaboration resulted in the establishment of the Women's Bureau and the state protection of women. However, the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* somewhat obscure this vital role by highlighting their domestic roles instead. This omission also supports the SCAP's propaganda as the liberator of passive, docile Japanese women.

As Housewives

This study finds that 21.56 percent—or 36 out of 167 images of women in the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes*:[3] portray Japanese housewives. The newspaper mostly depicts them at home, uninterested in politics and focused more on their domestic responsibilities. Figures 3, 4, and 5 are some of the examples. Figure 3 has a Japanese wife buying her family's rationed fish for the day. Figure 4, from the 18 January 1948 issue, shows a mother reading to her children. Figure 5 features the same mother sweeping the floor of her home.

THE JAPANESE WIFE buys her ration of fish from the local dealer. She has already given her ration slips, and the bookkeeper in the back has checked her name to see that she is registered and has a right to buy at this shop. Eighth Army MG teams all over Japan spot check such stores to see that certificates of dealers on amount of fish on hand check, that consumers have ration books, that their names are on the store books, that prices are official, and that weights are just.

Figure 3: A Japanese Wife Buys Fish (Image and caption from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 14 March 1948, p.6. Courtesy of Stars and Stripes, All Rights Reserved).



The evening chore of reading to the children is Mrs. Yonekawa's most pleasant task of a harried and busy day. Heeding "Setsuden," she uses only one 40-watt bulb and turns it off promptly when the children begin to tire.

Figure 4: *Left*, A Japanese Mother Reads to Her Children (Reprinted from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 18 January 1948, p. 12. Courtesy of Stars and Stripes, All Rights Reserved).

There is little time for play with her children for Mrs. Yonekawa, but she does pause occasionally in the routine of household tasks to answer the many questions asked by her youngest son. Attired in apron and protective head cover, she takes a break from dusting the "shoji" and sweeping the "tatami" to answer the eternal "Why, Mommy?"

Figure 5: *Right*, Occupation: Housewife (Image and caption from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 18 January 1948, p. 12. Courtesy of Stars and Stripes, All Rights Reserved).

Figures 4 and 5 accompany an article, written by a Western woman, Marygot Davis, that narrates the responsibilities of a Japanese housewife. Depicting her doing her duties and taking care of her children, the image is captioned, "There is little time for play with her children for Mrs. Yonekawa, but she does pause occasionally in the routine of the household tasks to answer the many questions asked by her younger son. Attired in apron and protective head cover, she takes a break from dusting the 'shoji' and sweeping the 'tatami' to answer the eternal, 'Why, Mommy?'" (Davis

1948, 12). As one of the families who does not have a servant, she handles everything in the household: her house, her three children, her husband, and her in-laws. The article summarizes her everyday life:

> Mrs. Yonekawa would, if she had spare time, go in for flower arranging, samisen playing, and tea ceremonies. Except for the fact that her busy schedule precludes these gentle pastimes, Mrs. Yonekawa's position, interest, and duties are not much altered from those of her mother. Politics and the news hold little interest to her. Her world extends from her home to the shops and is inhabited by her family whose problems are uppermost in her mind. (Davis 1948, 12)

It can easily be deduced that the mother had been shaped by a pre-Pacific War gender ideology, and the description gives an idea of how the ideas of Japanese femininity changed little even during the Occupation. The article quotes Mrs. Yonekawa, "I must do all the work myself and carry around potato sacks as was done by the lowest classes before the war. But this is the plight of all the housewives because Japan was defeated" (Davis 1948, 12). Both image and caption dovetail with the SCAP's "reverse course" and Cold War propaganda: the perception of passive Japanese women who belong in the home and need emancipation.

As Colonial Subjects

The caption of Figure 6 reads, "Ruth Dennis, civilian worker at Oita Military Government Team, makes a routine inspection of Japan's school lunch program. Engaged in the preparation of the hot nourishment is a group of the mothers of the school children, who rotate the responsibility of preparing lunches" (Pacific Stars and Stripes 19 December 1948, 5). Figure 6 shows the dynamics between American and Japanese women. From a postcolonial perspective, Ruth Dennis—a white woman—represents the occupier and her superiority over her Japanese companions. Towering over them as they prepare food for the children, Dennis observes and, to use

the word in the article, "inspects" the activity (Pacific Stars and Stripes 19 December 1948, 5). The image also showcases American women's contribution in restructuring Japan as part of the SCAP's propaganda.


Spot Inspection By MG Worker

(Signal Corps Photo)

Ruth Dennis, civilian worker at Oita Miliary Government Team, makes a routine inspection of Japan's school lunch program. Engaged in preparation of the hot nourishment is a group of the mothers of the school children, who rotate the responsibility of preparing the lunches.

Figure 6: Spot Inspection of School Lunches (Image and caption from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 2 April 1948. Public Domain, Signal Corps).

Similarly, Figure 7 shows American women teaching their Japanese counterparts how to be perfect American housewives as they prepare to go abroad. Authored by a Japanese man (Tajiri 25 July 1948, 12), the article narrates, "[t]hey (Japanese women) have a childlike earnestness to learn and a mature awareness of the wide horizons of the West that marriage has opened up to them. They are aware of the problems of acceptance, adjustments and communication that go along with being a foreign bride." The willingness of Japanese women to learn and conform to their husbands' culture could be attributed to the superiority of the West and to Japanese traditional gender roles. These gave the Americans the position and the capability to teach Japanese women.

Figure 7: Practical Democracy (Image from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 25 July 1948, p. 12. Courtesy of Stars and Stripes, All Rights Reserved).

Gender Dynamics

Meanwhile, some women in the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* are shown working alongside their husbands while taking care of their children. Figure 8—an image from the 19 December 1948 issue—reveals a housewife doing just that, helping her fisherman husband. It is one of several photos of the same household.

The woman's family is one of 1,500 families who lived in houseboats in Tokyo (Hutton 1948). Written by an American officer, the article acknowledges the wife's contribution to their livelihood, but focuses largely on her involvement with her children and the family's way of life. Interestingly, while the husband is shown doing his job, none of the images portray his engagement in care work. It is not even mentioned in the article. This suggests that despite policies such as Article 24, old power dynamics and traditional gender roles remain in the family. Among all the images analyzed for this study, only one image shows a father carrying his child (Figure 9).

Figure 8: A Working Mother (Image from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 19 December 1948, p. 12. Courtesy of Stars and Stripes, All Rights Reserved).

Leaves For United States

(Signal Corps Photo)

Because an American soldier who died on the battlefield intended to bind friendly relations with the Japanese, Robert Nishiyama, a former Kamikaze pilot, will receive a four-year college education at La Fayette College, Philadelphia, Pa. Selected from a number of applicants, Nishiyama will be educated in the U.S. with money obtained from the death insurance of Robert Johnstone, a soldier who only wanted to further understanding between the Japanese and Americans and to bring lasting peace between the two nations. Photo above shows Nishiyama with his wife and child.

Figure 9: A Japanese Family Leaves for the United States (Image and caption from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 16 September 1948, p .1. Public Domain, Signal Corps).

The setting, however, is neither in the home nor in the workplace. Robert Nishiyama, the husband and father, is carrying the child, but it does not mean that he is the caretaker. Unfortunately, there is not enough indication in the images to establish their family dynamics. The photo shows the Nishiyamas leaving for the US because Robert had a scholarship. The family adheres to a new culture by wearing Western clothes and adopting American names. Nonetheless, whether Nishiyama got his name in honor of his benefactor, who was also named Robert, remains a mystery; the article gives no other information about the family.

As far as pre-Pacific War family dynamics is concerned, because of their inferior status, Japanese women often walked behind their husbands (Arai 1999). Even so, no images explicitly portray women serving their spouses, though Figure 10 below depicts a Japanese man—a member of the military-police—receiving a Commendation Ribbon from his wife during a ceremony in Sendai, Japan.

Figure 10: Awarded Commendation Ribbon (Image and caption from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 23 July 1948, p. 5. Public Domain, Signal Corps).

Working Housewives, Gender Double Standards

Nonetheless, *Pacific Stars and Stripes* does showcase Japanese women's ability to depart from tradition and disagree with their husbands prior to the Allied occupation. Such is the case of Mrs. Kuwatani, a teacher for 20 years (Figure 11).

The article accompanying Figure 11—showing Mrs. Kuwatani who was also a housewife—gives a glimpse of men and women's salary as a teacher during that time. "Mrs. Kuwatani's salary amounts to some 3,000 yen a month… He [The husband] makes approximately three times that amount…" as an office worker (Crane 1948, 6). Despite the existence of the Labor Standard Law, the article shows that equality in the labor market is not so easily achieved.

S. TSURUYE KUWATANI, Japanese primary school teacher picks
me on a harmonium while she points out the words to the song for
her young charges. The diversified program for the education of
ng children requires her to have some ability in music in additio
other phases of teaching.

Figure 11: A Japanese Housewife Teaches Primary School Children (Reprinted from *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 25 April 1948, p. 6. Courtesy of Stars and Stripes, All Rights Reserved).

Caveats

Although this paper has largely focused on the images of housewives in the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, it must be clarified that the rest of the images in that year's issue also show women working outside the home (Rosario 2020; 2021). As such, they somewhat lend support to the SCAP's propaganda of liberating women from traditional gender roles. More importantly, that the 1948 issues showing both housewives and working women exemplifies the contradictory impulses behind the discourses on women during the American occupation of Japan: liberated yet compelled to perform domestic tasks.

Although the topic of working Japanese women has been discussed elsewhere (Rosario 2020, 2021), there is one example that can be discussed in this paper and needs to be taken into account.[4] The article that accompanies Figure 11 explicitly states Mrs. Kuwatani's opposition to her husband. The American author, Esther Crane, who regularly wrote for the newspaper, clearly expresses her support for Mrs. Kuwatani—which can be interpreted as female sympathy. Crane (1948, 6) adds that "it is to be hoped that Mrs. Kuwatani continues to disregard her husband's protests and goes on with her teaching career." Mrs. Kuwatani, aside from teaching for 20 years, had been married to her then husband since 1940. Thus, it is likely that her decision to teach was not influenced by the new Constitution, hinting that some Japanese women already practiced their agency prior to the Japanese occupation.

Summing up

The occupation of Japan brought upon great changes to the country. It was stripped of its previous imperial constitution and obtained a new one, approved and created largely by the Allied powers. As part of the SCAP's restructuring, it also vowed to improve the treatment of Japanese women who were seen as victims of the traditional family structure. This was one of the ways that the SCAP justified its stay in the country: upholding women's liberation. By granting women the right to vote and revising the Meiji

Constitution, the SCAP implemented policies such as the Labor Standard Law and those that dealt with the state protection of women. As an occupier, the West saw itself as superior, Japan's savior.

This image was perpetrated in and by the US media, which obscured the role of Japanese women in the struggle for suffrage. With the onset of the Cold War, the SCAP saw Japan as a potential ally and eventually decided to apply a reverse course in 1948. It insisted on, among other things, an ideology of domesticity, where women were expected to fulfill their traditional obligations in the home. This somewhat complicated the portrayals of women in the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*. Despite this Cold War propaganda, the US still depicted the successful emancipation of women in mainstream media, cementing the dominance of Western hegemony. The SCAP continued to be upheld as saviors of Japanese women, as per the policies included in the 1947 Constitution.

This contradictory portrait is evident in how the 1948 issues of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* showcase both housewives and working women, the latter symbolizing their liberation from home. What emerges from these images is a complex amalgam. The supposed liberation of the women contrasts with their portrayal as housewives who need to be saved. Aside from the few photos that show women voting, the newspaper's 1948 issues omit the presence of Japanese female politicians and of Japanese women's greater political participation. The discrepancy between such policies and the images raises an interesting question: if the SCAP wanted to justify their policies and their role as liberators, why did they not promote more images of Japanese women exercising their voting rights and the like, even prior the reverse course?

The answer arguably lies in the reverse course. While traditional gender norms have long existed in Japan and the US, the emergence of the Cold War gave impetus to the promotion of domesticity, which was largely based on the US' family ideology, wherein the husband is the breadwinner, and the wife, the homemaker. At the same time, this portrayal of passivity and domesticity helped justify Japan's need for the US; it showcased the

superiority of Americans, including its women, over "inferior" Japanese women, who had to be liberated from a patriarchal culture through the SCAP's policies. Images of Japanese women with Americans often depict them as students or in inferior roles, but they are also shown working outside the home, a departure from their more traditional roles.

This article shows that a closer look into the policy makers' own media allows for the unraveling of their current propaganda at that time—and somewhat confirming the implementation of their policies. However, this article has only scratched the surface of the portrayals of American and Japanese women. Further research may showcase whether or not there is a similarity or a difference in their treatment within the newspaper. Meanwhile, research on the portrayal of Japanese working women in the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* is already in the works.

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Endnotes

[1] This paper adapts the the acronym "SCAP," commonly used by similar literature, to refer to both General MacArthur and his GHQ, unless stated otherwise.

[2] Elena Sugiyama, Facebook message with author, 30 August 2019.

[3] These images are from newspaperarchive.com and their use in this article has been granted permission by Stars and Stripes Central Office - Archives & Library.

[4] This paper comprised only some parts of the author's thesis, which also accounts for the images of working women (Rosario 2020, 2021).

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