



Nassrine Azimi

# The United States and Cultural Heritage Protection in Japan (1945-1952)

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

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The United States and Cultural Heritage Protection in Japan (1945-1952)

# Asian History

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*They say the cup in Shōsō-in was brought to Japan from Persia by way of China and Korea.*

Inoue Yasushi, *The Opaline Cup*, Translation by James T. Araki

*A nation stays alive when its culture stays alive.*

Plaque at the entrance of the National Museum of Afghanistan

*These are the memories of mankind, and they are lost forever.*

Donny George Youkhanna, former Director-General of Iraq Museums

*I dedicate this book to my late father H.P. Azimi and to my mother, A.J. Azimi, whose deep feelings for beauty have kept alive our cultural heritage, even in exile; and to scholars, craftsmen, conservators, museum curators and all who strive to protect cultural and historical treasures in times of war, violence and ignorance.*

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All this is for the next generation – for Arianna, Ryan, Jakie, Charlotte and all the children: sheer beauty.



# Foreword

I first met Nassrine Azimi in 2006 at an international conference in Japan. She was at the time Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Office for Asia and the Pacific, in Hiroshima. The discussion focused on international affairs and the role that culture plays in promoting peace through understanding. Many speakers waxed eloquent over those two days, but one stood out for her passionate plea to accept and promote those whose cultures are ignored or found strange or unworthy, and how horrific it is to abuse and diminish them. I have followed Nassrine's development of these ideas since then, both through informal conversations and her many writings found in publications such as the *New York Times* and her 2015 book, *Last Boat to Yokohama*.

Throughout her life, we find a person who appreciates and relishes the dynamics of local histories and cultures, but ties these seamlessly to the global. Nassrine is known by all who connect with her, whether personally, professionally or virtually, as a force guided by expansive curiosity and knowledge tied to a passion for cultural heritage protection, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Born in Iran, later becoming a Swiss citizen, and now residing in Japan, Nassrine begins her day wondering how the world, all of it, will shape her, and how she can help shape it by connecting us all. This book is but one of her most recent contributions in this journey to which she invites us, her latest contribution extolling the importance and the power of culture in our lives, and the need to protect it.

The Introduction to this book is titled, 'Occupation is Not War'. Here we are reminded of the destructive power of cultural stereotypes as represented through the racist caricatures used by both the American and Japanese propaganda machines, the very machines that encouraged the horrors perpetrated during the war in the Pacific. Nassrine then leads us to the back rooms of a small number of far-sighted American officials and scholars who understood that the protection of the enemy's deeply revered and matchless cultural properties, be they sacred sites or treasures, public spaces or traditional architecture, held the potential to heal both sides, eventually to right the ship from hatred to understanding. It shows an enlightened appreciation for the humanity of the very people these Americans had only recently been killing. Surprisingly, we discover that some of these plans took shape before the war's end and the start of the Occupation – surely an inspiring example of what can be accomplished when people in power begin protecting a former enemy's cultural heritage even before they land in



the country. These men and women understood early on that their actions could make room for a more peaceful, mutually advantaged citizenry of both countries.

The contrast to modern times is striking, and instructive. Nassrine alludes only briefly to the dismissive, pitiful efforts on the part of the U.S. to protect the cultural properties of Iraq and Afghanistan following the invasions and occupations of these countries but instead asks the reader to reflect on how the world, especially the United States, could have lost its way in so short a time. Being reminded of current failures after following the more enlightened actions in Japan before, one wonders how today's political and military leaders could so easily dismiss the global peacebuilding advantages of celebrating and protecting ancient and priceless cultural heritage.

This book describes a brief but remarkable episode in preserving cultural heritage sites and identity, reminding us of how interconnected we are, and of how beautiful and seamless the tapestry of cultural representations exists all around us, if we but have the foresight and patience to appreciate them. It reminds us what an enlightened people, guided by an enlightened leadership, can actually accomplish.

*Edgar A. Porter*  
*Professor Emeritus*  
*Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University*

## Preface

This book is about the American Occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952, seen through the lens of culture. It tells the story of how during WWII a handful of brilliant and dedicated scholars, based at the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) headquarters in Tokyo, made it their mission to protect the cultural property of a hated and recently defeated enemy from chaos, destruction and even the rampages of their own troops.<sup>1</sup> The book describes the long road travelled by Americans and Japanese alike – not just scholars but also politicians and policymakers, military personnel and ordinary citizens – before and throughout the war, who made the safeguard of cultural heritage under the occupation possible.

Three distinct but intertwining principles of the American Occupation of Japan inform this narrative throughout. The first was the attention paid during its planning to ‘cultural understanding’ – in this case creating an *environment* which allowed diverse individuals and programs specialized in or devoted to Japanese studies across various branches of the United States’ government to exercise influence and undertake what was possible and necessary to *know* the enemy. Why and how this could be done, considering how many other pressing priorities there were, and how spectacularly absent such a stance has been in more recent military occupations, was one of my initial queries.

The second was the importance of preserving the enemy’s cultural heritage in war and even more compellingly during the Occupation, as did the United States in Japan. Why did the most powerful nation on earth go to the trouble of doing so? Again, one short answer is that the planners understood that pride in cultural heritage bestowed dignity, and an enemy or an occupied nation without dignity is far more hostile, desperate and therefore difficult to govern than one that feels its culture respected, or at least not destroyed, by the occupier.

Third and last, it was a matter of responsibility. An occupier is bound, by international law and by simple ethics, to preserve the cultural heritage of the occupied – not just so as to placate its former enemy but because cultural heritage of any nation is the heritage of all of humanity. It is the contention of

<sup>1</sup> *World War II, the Pacific War, the Asia-Pacific War* have been used interchangeably, though the Japanese war theater is often referred to as the *Asia-Pacific War* or even the *15-Year War*. As my focus is mainly on the American side, I refer for the most part to the generic term WWII. Equally, Occupation is spelled with a capital O when referring specifically to Japan.

this book that many of the Americans involved in the Occupation, including within the arts and monuments community, firmly believed in and lived up to this principle.

Throughout the Occupation years, competent and qualified American cultural experts, based at the Arts and Monuments (A&M) Division of the Civil Information and Education (CIE) section of SCAP headquarters, worked in close partnership with like-minded Japanese scholars to improve and enforce the protection of Japan's cultural heritage – one outcome of which was the early passage of Japan's 1950 Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.<sup>2</sup> What was truly remarkable was that so *early on* American occupiers had had the foresight to establish a cluster within SCAP devoted exclusively to arts and monuments. This was not as surprising as one would think, however, and the policies it propelled did not appear out of thin air, but rather were the consequence of a long, deliberate process. There had been broad thinking, endless debates and elaborate plans regarding cultural heritage protection in war areas *in advance* of the actual Occupation. Familiarity with Japanese culture and history, and before that a certain cultural affinity for Japan within American circles of power, continued to influence post-war perceptions and shaped some of the early policies of the United States and, during the Occupation, impacted the work of SCAP itself. Once Occupation began, considering that its initial priorities as well as those of the Japanese government were overwhelmingly about survival, security and economic rehabilitation, the fact that culture in general and cultural heritage in particular remained serious components of SCAP's postwar reconstruction plans seemed to me to deserve great attention.

Cultural understanding and heritage protection in war and occupation remain contemporary challenges. While the central thesis of this book is the occupation of Japan, it is impossible not to think, throughout, of more recent conflicts and occupations. I hope that at the very least my work can prompt more debate and reflections on the preparatory measures and initial policies (or lack thereof) before the occupations of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. One symbolic moment stood out for me as the beginning of the unravelling tragedy that the occupation of Iraq was to become: the depth of disconnect between rhetoric and reality, and maybe disdain for cultural considerations reflected in the terse statement made at a press conference

2 The Agency for Cultural Affairs and most Japanese language sources refer to 'properties'. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) official depository refers to 'property'. While their meaning and intent are the same, for purposes of consistency I maintain 'properties' when a reference or direct quote, but 'property' otherwise.

on April 11, 2003 by then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. On being questioned about the theft of treasures from the National Museum of Iraq by mere looters, even as highly equipped American soldiers and tanks stood by, Rumsfeld responded, 'Stuff happens.'<sup>3</sup> In hindsight, that moment seemed to distill the absence of any genuine understanding of or empathy for the preservation of Iraq's culture and cultural heritage, or even the most basic readiness for the momentous task of occupation.

It is not the purview of this book to generalize about cases other than Japan. Far more thorough and independent studies on these themes, and on culture as an essential feature of recent occupational enterprises, are needed – both the culture of the occupied lands and, no less urgently, the culture of the occupying powers. But if my book can raise any interest in how and why these thematics are so important, then I shall feel gratified.

Looking back at the American experience in Japan, it becomes clear that unless a country, its culture, religion, history and society are deeply understood and appreciated by individuals not on the sidelines but actually embedded or at least influential in the occupation planning machinery, it is hardly realistic to expect that cultural preservation can become a legitimate military priority. No occupying force can justify or sustain the expenditure of human capital and material resources for a cause that it, or its political masters, neither understands nor considers paramount.

3 [http://www.historycommons.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=us\\_occupation\\_of\\_iraq\\_tmIn&us\\_occupation\\_of\\_iraq\\_tmIn\\_general\\_topics=us\\_occupation\\_of\\_iraq\\_tmIn\\_post\\_invasion\\_looting](http://www.historycommons.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=us_occupation_of_iraq_tmIn&us_occupation_of_iraq_tmIn_general_topics=us_occupation_of_iraq_tmIn_post_invasion_looting)



# Introduction

## Occupation is not war

America spent close to four years entangled with the Japanese in the Pacific War. It was a brutal and bloody conflict. In total, some 1.75 million military were killed on the Japanese side, more than 110,000 on the American side.<sup>1</sup> The battle of Iwo Jima, a speck in the Pacific Ocean, alone took more than 25,000 lives and left as many wounded. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed almost one in every three citizens of each city.

Hatred and prejudices ran deep on both sides. Racial stereotyping added further venom. Technological advances had given greater power to propaganda machines, which became ferocious throughout the war. Sophisticated tools in photography and mass media meant that not only anti-American/anti-Japanese propaganda campaigns were far more efficient compared to wars of earlier times, they were also reaching vaster numbers of the population, in ways that would have been inconceivable in past battles.

Caution and distrust, before and in the early phases of the Occupation, were constants. America's civilian and military decision-makers neither liked nor trusted Japan, seemingly even less so than they liked or trusted Germany. Ernie Pyle, the legendary American journalist killed while covering the Pacific War, wrote of the hatred the Americans cultivated for Japanese in raw terms: 'In Europe we felt that our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people. But out here I soon gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice.'<sup>2</sup> Such observations shock today, but they were quite representative of the times.

The Americans, like the Japanese later, also expected the worst from the other. In a flow of 'Top Secret Directives' prepared by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee and signed by the secretaries from the three branches, the fear of the Japanese is palpable, resulting in minute and detailed considerations regarding every probable scenario and outcome for an occupation. In a directive dated July 10, 1945, for example, one reads:

<sup>1</sup> The Encyclopedia Britannica estimates the total number of Japanese dead during Pacific War at two million, inclusive of civilians, but not including those who later died of starvation and disease. Robert Harvey in his book gives the figure at three million.

<sup>2</sup> Quote from Ernie Pyle, published in *Brave Men*, 2014 and in [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/188592.Ernie\\_Pyle](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/188592.Ernie_Pyle)

The conditions which will bring about a Japanese collapse or surrender and the situation which will exist at the time cannot be accurately foreseen. However, there does exist the definite possibility that a collapse or surrender may occur any time prior to a total defeat. In order to be prepared for this contingency, it is necessary that plans be made, based on assumed conditions [...].<sup>3</sup>

Another directive, this one issued shortly after surrender, on August 28, 1945, reads:

It should be recognized that the estimate of occupational forces required [in Phase I and to some extent in Phase II] are based on being able to counter acts of treachery and sabotage on the part of local Japanese. Although there has been no indication to date that such acts are likely to occur, it is considered prudent to be prepared for any contingencies until such time as experience in the occupation of the first two or three positions may warrant reduction in the estimate of forces required in these periods.<sup>4</sup>

There is an on-going myth that the Occupation of Japan was somehow easy (presumably as compared to future occupations). It is at times implied that the Japanese were rather willing and welcoming hosts of the occupiers, or assumed that the GIs were all well-behaved and respectful towards the occupied. In reality it was all extremely complex, full of hit-and-misses, of failures as much as successes. In the immediate aftermath of defeat, millions of soldiers of the Japanese Empire had returned from the war front. Economic circumstances were dire beyond description and would get worse throughout 1946. With no jobs and little dignity or respect from their own compatriots, let alone the occupiers, there was no guarantee that at any moment a group of desperate soldiers would not make a suicidal attack against the American invaders, about whom horror stories had been circulated relentlessly throughout the war years. The father of one of my closest friends in Hiroshima, in 1945 a 22-year old demobilized soldier, had vowed, probably like many others in the early stages of surrender, to murder

3 Joint War Plans Committee, a plan for the U.S. Occupation of strategic positions in the Far East in the event of a Japanese collapse or surrender prior to 'Olympic' or 'Coronet' [code names used for invasion of Japan], had estimated the possible time of collapse or surrender of Japan as August 15, 1945 – which was to be the exact date of surrender (from Edgar A. Porter and Ran Ying Porter, discussed September 2, 2015).

4 Joint War Plans Committee, Ultimate Occupation of Japan and Japanese Territory, J.W.P.C. 385/3 of August 28, 1945 (from Edgar A. Porter and Ran Ying Porter, discussed September 2, 2015).

General MacArthur. Imprisoned by Japanese authorities in Hiroshima, he was only brought to his senses by an old prison ward, who convinced him that nothing could be achieved by such a foolish act. Thousands of angry young men in Japan were in a similar frame of mind at the time. Most historians now agree that had such actions been sparked, the Americans would have needed hundreds of thousands more occupying forces.

Difficult decisions, such as whether or not to maintain the Emperor system, or whether or not to keep the existing bureaucracy in place, had been continuously debated in US decision-making circles from as early as 1942. The main consideration that ultimately weighed *against* the Emperor's indictment, for example, was that removing him could create such a vacuum, unpredictability or possible chaos that the risks simply did not justify the end – an enormously difficult decision to explain and defend for politicians in 1945, considering that at the time more than 70% of the American population wanted the Emperor of Japan arrested and punished as a war criminal.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, the Occupation chose to work through the existing Japanese bureaucracy, in hindsight a wise decision considering how few Americans knew Japan well or spoke the language. This policy further forced the Japanese government itself to take responsibility for the sensitive demilitarization of millions of returning soldiers. That all this could unfold without violence was a remarkable achievement, lulling many to think now, with the benefit of hindsight, that it had been somehow easy to achieve.

Thomas Lifson also points out the high risks for chaos and violence, especially in the early stages of the Occupation. He considers tendencies to forget or underestimate the impact that such fears had on many political decisions taken at the time at best uninformed, at worst dangerous:

5 The issue remains deeply controversial among both Japanese and Western scholars. In December 2014, Herbert P. Bix, author of 'Hirohito and the making of modern Japan' (HarperCollins, 2000) penned an op-ed in the *New York Times* <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/30/opinion/hirohito-string-puller-not-puppet.html> challenging, again, the premise that the Emperor was merely a puppet of the militarists. The philosopher Kato Norihiro made the same observation in another op-ed a few weeks later on the occasion of the release of the Hirohito papers, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/15/opinion/norihiro-kato-daring-to-ask-hirohito-about-his-role-in-WW2.html>. An earlier assessment, by Sebastian Swain in *Reflections on the Allied Occupation of Japan: Democratization and the Evasion of War Responsibility: the Allied Occupations of Japan and the Emperor*, presented at the London School of Economics and Political Science in October 1999, argues that MacArthur's decision to maintain the imperial institution in the chaotic circumstances of late 1945 was wise, but questions the decision to protect the person of Hirohito rather than pressing abdication in favor of a less tainted imperial family member, as was suggested by even some members of the Emperor's inner circles. Takemae (2002) reprises a similar position, see especially pp. 519–520.



Occupation is never easy. Even the most successful of military occupations under the best possible circumstances have their troubles. This is a factor to keep firmly in mind when considering the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The American occupation of Japan has to be counted as a spectacular success – maybe the greatest success in the world's history of occupations – in retrospect [...]. But at the time, it was often dicey. [...] To be sure, there were no insurgents flowing over the border because Japan is an island nation. But the danger of a communist revolution was always regarded as serious, all the more so after war broke out on the Korean Peninsula. There was also a counter-force, the often shadowy remnants of militarist circles, consisting of secret societies, purged officials and their confederates, and those seeking to restore something like the pre-war regime.<sup>6</sup>

Looking at Japan today, it is also easy to forget how catastrophic its economic and social conditions were at the time of unconditional surrender in August 1945. By then the country had been at war for almost 15 years, and the end result of its military follies was utter ruin. In the final months of the conflict, more than 60 major cities had been heavily firebombed and two laid to nuclear waste. The number of civilian dead and wounded was horrendously high, and the intensity of the suffering of those who had survived indescribable. Though the Americans had spent most of the war years preparing for its end, and for possible occupation, in reality none had anticipated the magnitude of Japan's devastation nor the disarray of its people. Few foreign observers have conveyed the scale of the tragedy as succinctly as the historian Marius Jansen, in the opening pages of *The Making of Modern Japan*. Jansen writes how as part of his military service he was dispatched to Okinawa, finding there a gentle people 'stripped of everything except their dignity, dazed and surprised to find themselves alive after the carnage of a battle that had reduced their numbers by one-quarter'.<sup>7</sup> John W. Dower describes how the Americans were to confront 'a populace that [...] had undergone intense "socialization for death"'.<sup>8</sup> James A. Cogswell quotes for his part this moving statement by one of the first Japanese speakers to the churches of the United States:

6 Thomas Lifson, 'The lessons of the occupation of Japan', the *American Thinker*, posted August 22, 2007, [http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2007/08/the\\_lessons\\_of\\_the\\_occupation.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2007/08/the_lessons_of_the_occupation.html)

7 Jansen (2000), p. xiii.

8 Dower (1999), p. 87.

Everything in Japan is crushed, smashed, or diminished, spiritually and materially. She has surrendered completely. She has no sovereignty at present, has no diplomacy, no army, no navy, no steamers, no honor, no pride, no confidence, no houses, no clothes, no food to live on. I do not want to exaggerate the desperate conditions of Japan too much and give you a misunderstanding – but I cannot give you false information.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, and in spite of such calamitous post-war conditions, when culture could understandably have been of the least concern for leaders, there were those Japanese and American alike still concerned about and committed to the protection of Japan's cultural heritage.

Neither was all lost in August 1945. Japan – in spite of the wreckage of intense firebombing in the war's final months – still had a significant number of cultural treasures and institutions. Some 150 museums were in existence – the buildings damaged or destroyed beyond hope but many of the collections, especially those of the major museums, moved out to the countryside for safekeeping, often thanks to the heroic efforts of staff and curators. Until 1943 and even throughout the war, the Ministry of Education had continued designating cultural property, though thereafter it too focused all efforts and resources on removal and safe storage.<sup>10</sup> These artistic collections, as well as temples, shrines, gardens and other treasures, now urgently needed to be put under some protective measures if they were to escape damage from what could be a just as catastrophic situation of post-war chaos.

Did the American Occupation have any direct influence on preserving Japan's cultural heritage in the immediate post-war years? Evidence suggests that it did. To begin with, the very existence of a division within SCAP, one devoted entirely to arts and monuments, was an extremely rare feature, not seen so early or at such a scale in any American military occupation, before Japan or since. That the group's mandate visibly enjoyed the endorsement of Washington, the senior leadership at SCAP, and the Japanese legislature and executive (notably the Ministry of Education) was also telling. Finally, and importantly, the fact that some of the Division's advisors and staff were already, or soon to become, prominent professionals in artistic and cultural circles indicates that this Occupation may well have been a case all unto its own. In the words of Geoffrey R. Scott:

9 James A. Cogswell, 'The Occupation: A New Day in Japan's Religious History', in *The Occupation of Japan: The Grass Roots*, 1991, p. 37

10 Geoffrey R. Scott, 'The Cultural Property Laws of Japan: Social, Political, and Legal Influences', *Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal*, 2003, p. 351.

This succession of distinguished scholars, the personal influences that they shared, the empathy each had for the Japanese people and their art as demonstrated by their vocational commitments and personal efforts, and the unbroken intellectual lineage harkening back to Morse, Fenollosa, and Okakura, was the vehicle through which the West in general, and the United States in particular, significantly impacted the cultural property perspectives of Japan.<sup>11</sup>

But it was definitely not easy, especially had there not been a clearly articulated official policy by the War Department, to protect cultural property and assets. Such a policy did exist however, and was promptly endorsed by General MacArthur from the early moments of the Occupation. Without this supportive framework, it is hard to imagine that a handful of staff at A&M could help put in place protective measures, considering culture would be at the lowest echelon of everyone's pressing 'to-do' lists, both on the American as well as the Japanese side. It helped that within the ranks of the small A&M team, there were competent experts who possessed enough diplomatic skills to work ably with the US military and with the Japanese government. These Americans complemented perfectly the work of their Japanese counterparts – prominent scholars in their own right who worked as field representatives, examiners, interpreters or advisors to the Division. These intertwined networks of expertise laid the foundations in the crucial early months, so that Japan's pre-war efforts at cultural property inventory and protection systems were not only not lost but emerged even better and stronger by 1950, despite unimaginably difficult post-war conditions.

There was, of course, an ideological, even philosophical, leitmotiv and context to all this work. The word 'democratization' with regard to access to cultural goods appears frequently in the internal documents of the A&M Division. When, for example, the Imperial Household Agency of Japan acquiesced to an annual two-week public opening of the famed Shōsō-in treasury in Nara – till then off-limits to all except a selected few – this had been officially at the behest of Japanese scholars but was implicitly and explicitly endorsed by the A&M, one among many subtle influences and transformations introduced to the system. In another instance and long before it became reality in the 1960s and 1970s, there were tentative lists being studied by the A&M staff for creating a network of public prefectural museums. While it is true that such developments could have taken place anyway in later years, they certainly would not have happened so soon had the Occupation ignored, or worse still, abused the defeated enemy's

11 Scott (2003), p. 358.

cultural property – we can well imagine the kinds of damages that could have been inflicted. There emerges furthermore a certain convergence of ideas, even solidarity, between the American and Japanese experts and scholars towards similar goals for the protection and use of cultural assets. This was an auspicious arrangement that, as Takemae has noted, occurred not only in the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE), of which the Arts and Monuments Division was a part, but across SCAP in general.

Japanese employees [...] in some staff echelons, such as Legal Section and Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) outnumbered Americans. Most of these individuals, although occupying subordinate positions, were not only highly qualified for the tasks they performed but firmly committed to the ideals of reform. Serving as the eyes and ears of the staff sections, Japanese [...] were consulted daily on matters large and small.<sup>12</sup>

So it is possible to conclude that rather than any single person, policy or project on its own, it was the accumulation of many factors that helped create an effective ‘cultural policy’ at GHQ/SCAP, to the great benefit of Japan’s cultural property and future generations. Beate Sirota Gordon, who had grown up in Japan in the pre-war years and served from December 1945 to May 1947 as the first civilian woman on MacArthur’s staff, has described in these terms the continued post-war passion for Japanese art and culture – in this case referring to music:

When the war ended and the Occupation forces arrived, the Japanese were concerned mostly with keeping body and soul together. Nonetheless the music schools which had been devastated by bombs started gathering instruments [...].<sup>13</sup>

Till the end of her life, Sirota Gordon retained her optimism about the state of the Japanese arts and her faith in the power of culture in general. She also remained convinced that the American Occupation had had a positive influence on numerous aspects of Japanese society, including its cultural institutions and heritage.<sup>14</sup> At a symposium in Norfolk, she spoke thus about the performing arts of Japan, words that may be equally apt for much of this book’s arguments:

<sup>12</sup> Takemae (2002), p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> Sirota Gordon, Norfolk Symposium (1984), p. 137.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Sirota Gordon, January 2011, New York City.

The current state of the arts in Japan is excellent. Just as Japan is exporting Toyotas and Minoltas and Hondas, Japan is sending to North America such innovative groups as the off-beat Sankai Juku dance troupe, the theater of Suzuki Tadashi, and the music of Takemitsu Toru, as well as Kabuki, Bunraku and the Japanese classical dance and music. It is interesting to note that many Americans are now studying Japanese arts both in the United States and in Japan. Who would ever have predicted that there would be a Shakuhachi school in New York with thirty pupils, with a teacher who is an American? Who would ever have predicted that Queens College or Wesleyan University would have a course in Japanese Koto? Who would ever have thought that the most prestigious orchestra in the United States would have a Japanese conductor? Who would ever have thought that such universities as the University of Hawaii and the University of Kansas would teach young Americans Kabuki acting techniques? And so the seeds sown in the Occupation of Japan have borne fruit. Not only have they brought the Japanese performing arts into the forefront internationally, but they have made Americans appreciate and respect the arts of what used to be an alien country.<sup>15</sup>

The American Occupation of Japan may have been a rare, even unique example of a sustained effort to integrate cultural understanding into *prior thinking of and planning for an occupation*, marked by a commitment to cultural heritage protection from inception. It is fair to suggest that thereafter almost every single case of a US-led occupation, or its reconstruction policies in general – pre-, during and post-occupation – have underestimated or outright ignored the intrinsic universal values and significance of national and local cultures and cultural heritage. The price to pay has been steep, for the occupied but also for the occupier.

15 Sirota Gordon, Norfolk Symposium (1984/1988), p. 138.