

Enigma of the “Beautiful Enemy” Land : Photographic Representations of Japan in the *National Geographic Magazine* during the Meiji, Taisho, and Early Showa Eras¹

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1. Introduction

The history of the *National Geographic Magazine*² began in 1888. To be more specific, the National Geographic Society, which is the official publisher of the *NGM*, was founded in Washington D.C. by Gardiner Greene Hubbard that year. When starting its magazine, this “scientific” organization, according to Howard S. Abramson, was to have a dual purpose : “It was to be a sort of explorer’s club for the armchair-bound that could offer ‘good works’ and provide entertainment, and to provide professional geographers a place to meet their colleagues and mingle with prospective employers.” (Abramson 1987 : 33) Despite this purpose, which aimed to involve both amateur and professional geographers, the early issue of the *NGM* was considered a “slim, dull, and technical” journal for gentlemen scholars. (Collins and Lutz 1992 : 161) However, especially after Gilbert H. Grosvenor became the chief editor in 1903, this magazine would develop as the most widely read source of general scientific information in America. By 1918, its circulation exceeded 500,000 (Pauley 1979 : 517)

According to Julie A. Tuason, the early years of the *NGM* roughly fell on the wake of the Spanish-American War. Drawing on such historical background, Tuason argues that a critical reading of the *NGM* “exposes unstable ideological undercurrents... that drove and legitimated U.S. government policies toward its newly taken colonial and quasi-colonial possessions.” (Tuason 1999 : 35) Like this, critics of the *NGM* have examined this magazine in connection with the ideological implication of the US (or Western) colonialism and territorial assimilation. Such focus on Euro-American colonialism is inherent to the study of *NGM*’s representation of the non-Western world including Africa, South America, the Middle East, and Asia, although few scholarly works

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² *National Geographic Magazine* changed its title to *National Geographic* in 1959. In order to avoid any confusion of the reader, as well as considering the specific time range of research made for this paper, I regularly use the term *National Geographic Magazine* (the *NGM*) to refer to the magazine I examine here.

specifically deal with the *NGM*'s representation of Japan and the Japanese.

Given such an academic context, this paper examines the coverage of Japan and its people in *National Geographic Magazine* published between the end of the 19th century and the early 1940s, mainly focusing on the interaction between written text and photographic images. During the 1930s and the 1940s, the diplomatic relations between the United States and Japan had been unstable, and the change of the US-Japan political relationship also affected the visual representations of the Japanese in the US media. John W. Dower's *War without Mercy* (Dower 1986) is one of few scholarly works which examine the Pacific-War period's visual images of Japanese people in the US media. In this work, Dower examines the influence of Western—particularly American—people's "race hate" on media portrayal of Japanese people.

The racist code words and imagery that accompanied the war in Asia were often exceedingly graphic and contemptuous. The Western Allies, for example, consistently emphasized the "subhuman" nature of the Japanese, routinely turning to images of apes and vermin to convey this. With more tempered disdain, they portrayed the Japanese as inherently inferior men and women who had to be understood in terms of primitivism, childishness, and collective mental and emotional deficiency. (Dower 1986 : 9)

Such patterns of portraying the Japanese as Dower indicates, however, are not easily found in the *NGM* before and around the end of the Pacific War.³ Under the name of scientific accuracy, as well as based on its unique editorial policy which I will mention later, the *NGM* instead attempted to avoid portraying Japan as an ugly, inferior, but terrifying war-enemy of the US.

Careful investigation of the *NGM* articles reveals that this magazine's strategy of image construction was different from those of other media of that time, while it conducted oblique forms of propaganda through their portrayals of Japan and its people. Here, it is curious to note that the *NGM*'s representations of Japan and its people, particularly around the end of the Pacific War, appear in a peculiarly complex array of inconsistent images which can be described with contradictory terms such as uncertain, enigmatic, inferior and obedient to the US on the one hand, but highly civilized, modern, intelligent and yet irrational, therefore threatening, formidable, cunning, and all the while safe, nostalgic, and unchangeably beautiful on the other. To consider the significance of such rhetorical confusion, I would like to examine the characteristics of the *NGM*'s strategy of representing Japan and the Japanese by exploring the chronological shift of this magazine's visual/rhetorical representations. I argue that the inconsistency of the *NGM*'s representation of Japan during the wartime was because

³ The "Pacific War" is not usually distinguished from World War II and is common to be called as "Pacific Theater of World War II" particularly in the US. This paper, referring to the terminology suggested by John Dower (Dower 1986), uses the term the Pacific War in order to indicate the war which began on 7th December 1941, when Japan attacked the United States naval bases in Hawaii.

it was based on multiple images of Japan which had been separately made at different times. Like other popular magazines, the *NGM*'s representation of the non-Western countries including Japan has chronologically changed reflecting the socio-political trends of each period. Regarding this, Arne Kalland and Pamela J. Asquith say, “[C]oncepts themselves are not static but are continuously changing ; new dimensions or interpretations being added rather than replacing old ones.” (Asquith and Kalland 1997 : 7). My historical survey of the *NGM*'s articles underscores this viewpoint in contrast to previous studies in which the historical shift of the way representing Japan and the Japanese tends to be understood in an overly generalized manner, ignoring the inconsistencies between descriptions of Japan in different ages as well as the interaction between images and text. Based on such a perspective, this paper's ultimate goal is to draw more attention to the complex deployments of media portrayal of Japan and the Japanese as represented by the *NGM* during the Second World War.

2. Early-period Examples

Historical studies of the *NGM* claim that this magazine's uniqueness, as I mentioned before, is based on the fact that it started as an in-house magazine of a “scientific” organization called the National Geographic Society, which defined its journal as a “vehicle for scientific information.” (Lutz and Collins 1993 : 5) To maintain its reputation as a “*scientific* and educational organization” (Lutz and Collins 1993 : 24)(italics original), the third chief editor of the *NGM*, Gilbert Hovey Grosvenor, delineated his seven principles in the issue of March 1915. C. D. B. Bryan, the author of the official history of the National Geographic Society, summarizes the essential features of Grosvenor's seven guiding principles for editing as follows :

- 1) The first principle is absolute accuracy. Nothing must be printed which is not strictly according to fact...
 - 2) Abundance of beautiful, instructive, and artistic illustrations.
 - 3) Everything printed in the Magazine must have permanent value...
 - 4) All personalities and notes of a trivial character are avoided.
 - 5) Nothing of a partisan or controversial character is printed.
 - 6) Only what is of a kindly nature is printed about any country or people, everything unpleasant or unduly critical being avoided.
 - 7) The contents of each number is [sic] planned with a view of being timely...
- (Bryan 1987 : 90)

Based on these principles, the *NGM*'s articles were demanded to maintain the “permanent value” of its contents by avoiding specific descriptions of any personalities and trivial characteristics and to demonstrate its scientific accuracy through using assorted photographs.

As to the *NGM*'s representation of Japan and its people, Japanese scholar, Shuzo Kogure, examines the

characteristics of the *NGM*'s photo representations of Japan and the Japanese criticizing how they prevail the ideology of Western Orientalism.(Kogure 2008) As Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins indicate, the *NGM* covers a wide range of topics including “the geographic and cultural wonders of the United States, wildlife and nature stories, accounts of exploration of space, the oceans, the polar ice caps,” and “images of the peoples and cultures of the third world.” (Lutz and Collins 1993 : 1) In terms of Japan and its people, the very first article of the *NGM* concerning Japan was published in 1894. According to Kogure, from this year to the end of the 20th century, there are more than 100 articles dealing with Japan as a central theme. These articles about Japan also cover various topics such as natural beauty, natural disasters, traditions and culture, customs and rituals, animals and plants, colonial politics, military issues, domestic social trends, cities, rural life, and the people of Japan. (Kogure 2008 : 39)

When we limit the time range of investigation to between the end of the 19th century and the middle of the 1940s, there are 36 articles which include some description of Japan. This number is not outstanding as compared to that of articles concerning other non-Western regions. Because the *NGM* was founded as a journal of “geography,” it seems to pay impartial attention to various regions in the world although quite a few articles deal with the relatively new territories of the US such as Alaska and the Philippines. Articles about Japan in this period cover various topics : Alexander Graham Bell's visit to Japan, the commercial development of Japan, agriculture in Japan, travels to Nikko and other tourist spots such as Miyajima, Sakurajima volcanic eruption, woman's work in Japan, the geography of Japan, and so on. I investigated all the articles about Japan published during this period, primarily focusing on articles which include photography.

Regarding photography, Shuzo Kogure claims that the *NGM*, not only before the end of the Pacific War but rather throughout the 20th century, frequently use the images of young Japanese females wearing *kimono* in articles concerning Japan. Kogure argues that under the influence of Western colonial discourse, “the East has been symbolized as a sexually exploitable female.”⁵ (Kogure 2008 : 48) in American media like the *NGM*. After the opening of the Pacific War, Kogure continues, the images of *geisha* girls were replaced by those of male soldiers or traditional images of *samurai*, which was another stereotypical icon of the Japanese people. Yet, when you carefully investigate the *NGM*'s photographs' chronological shift of the subjects or themes, such a collective tendency as suggested by Kogure is not easily seen.

To get back to the very early history of the *NGM*, the role of photography of this magazine was small and limited. Because printing methods of photography at the end of the 19th century used steel engravings, a process which was enormously expensive and slow in its production, the board policy had limited the use of photographs only to those “subordinate to, and illustrative of, the text.” (Lutz and Collins 1993 : 27) This situation

⁴ Bell was the second president of the National Geographic Society.

⁵ Hereafter, the quotations from Kogure's book, which is originally written in Japanese, are translated by this paper's author into English.



Figure 1 EFFECTS OF THE EARTHQUAKE WAVE AT KAMAISHI, JAPAN, JUNE 15, 1896 (Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, “The Recent Earthquake Wave on the Coast of Japan,” *National Geographic Magazine* 7.9 [September 1896], PL.XXX)

also affected the photographic representations of the Japanese in the early period. For instance, the very first picture capturing a Japanese person appears in the September issue of 1896. [fig.1]⁶ This is one of four images depicting the earthquake catastrophe in Kamaishi, Iwate, which was publicized as a part of a short article entitled “The recent earthquake wave on the coast of Japan.” (Scidmore 1896) As the picture’s short caption suggests, this photograph seems to be taken as an objective record portraying the “effects of the earthquake wave at Kamaishi, Iwate, June 15, 1896.”⁷ The first Japanese captured in one of *NGM*’s photographic plates was a “man,” whose figure, standing in the midst of the aftermath among devastated homes caused by the subsequent tsunami, is obviously small and in the distance in the picture. His size in comparison to the destruction around him gives an indication of the overwhelming scale of the tsunami catastrophe. Given the format of this article, it is quite convincing that the *NGM*’s articles at that time literarily played the role of a “vehicle for scientific information” (Lutz and Collins 1993 : 5) following the policy of “absolute accuracy,” one of the *NGM*’s seven principles.

In the *NGM*’s articles about Japan, particularly those published between the 1900s and the 1910s, not many photographs appear. Among few examples, there is a picture which depicts a male figure standing in a bamboo forest. [fig.2] Interestingly, this picture is attached to an article discussing the quality of Japanese paper product and the value of Japanese bamboo as a commercial plant. (“Lessons from Japan” 1904) In this context, the figure of the old man, who wears a kimono and holds a hat in his hand, is not the focus of the picture. This is evident by the caption attached to that picture, which explains the general botany and culturing method of bam-

⁶ Hereafter, the captions attached to the figures in this paper are quoted from the original.

⁷ The caption attached to the PL. XXX. n.p. (one of the frontispiece plates)

⁸ The caption says, “A bamboo stem, or culm, attains its full height—40, 60, or 100 feet—in a single season. It is allowed to stand for 3 or 4 years before cutting in order that it may harden...” (“Lessons from Japan” 1904 : 223)



Figure 2 A Well-kept Forest of Timber bamboo (*Phyllostachys quilioi*)
 (“Lessons from Japan,” *National Geographic Magazine* 15.5 [May
 1904], p.223)

boo, curiously ignoring the existence of the man in the photograph.⁸ Also, the photograph of bamboo forest seems to be used to ornament the technical article with an image of exotic scenic beauty of Japan in order to entertain the Western reader. Another favorite subject of the *NGM* during this period is of a Buddhist monk. The article in April 1908 (De Forest 1908), for instance, includes a portrait of a male monk along with pictures of a temple, a volcano, and hot springs. Regarding the photo representation of this article, it is interesting to note that there are three large pictures portraying Japanese young males who are having a bath inside a public bath-house. Thus, hot springs and male bathers are additional examples of favored photographic subjects of the *NGM*. Such preference is also seen in the articles published in the 1920s, “The Geography of Japan” written by Walter Weston. One of this article’s photographic plates portrays three naked men, who stand under a hot-water cascade watching the direction of the photographer, with the caption: “Having a Hot Bath at the Shirahone Springs, among the Japanese Alps.” (Weston 1921 : 49)

3. Process of Modernization/Americanization

Thus, a chronological survey of the *NGM* photo representations of the Japanese, tracking the early decades of this journal, reveals that the chief photographic subjects were not women, but rather men. On the other hand,



Figure 3 DANCING GIRLS
 (William W. Chapin, “Glimpses of Japan,” *National Geographic Magazine* 22.11
 [November 1911], p.985)

in his book, Kogure begins by investigating images of Japanese women in the *NGM* starting with the analysis of an article published in 1911 entitled “Glimpses of Japan.” (Chapin 1911) According to Kogure, the term *geisha*⁹ was used for the first time in this article in its photo captions. Not only the term *geisha* but also the first photograph of “Japanese *geisha*” appeared in this article. Although the total length of “Glimpses of Japan” is about 37 pages, this article includes as many as 44 photographs. In other words, as compared to older articles, most pages of this article are covered by photographs and the sections dedicated to text totals less than 10 pages. In such a photo-dominant format, there are 5 pictures which portray young women beautifully dressed in *kimono*, with captions such as “A Group of Dancers,” “Three Little Maids from School,” “Geisha Girls,” and “Dancing Girls.” [fig.3] Kogure indicates that these portrayals of Japanese women, when exposed to the gaze of the elite male Anglo-American readers of the *NGM*, was closely associated with the Western traditional image of a Japanese *geisha* as being an innocent, pure, and obedient young girl, which stems from images prevailed by John Luther Long’s *Madam Butterfly*. (Kogure 2008 : 54)

The reason that the number of such “*geisha* girls” pictures remarkably increased like above in that period might lie in the fact that by 1915 “the extensive use of photographs was one of *National Geographic*’s distinguishing features.” (Collins and Lutz 1992 : 172) Before the increasing demand for photographs, the *NGM* editor must have faced enormous difficulty gathering enough number of pictures to cover the magazine pages. Under such a circumstance, it was natural that the editors were forced to use so-called “souvenir photos,” which were produced by Japanese makers of merchandise for Western tourists. Indeed, as Kogure reveals, quite a few pictures in the *NGM* articles about Japan during the 1910s and 1920s were clipped from a souvenir photography

⁹ Kogure uses the term *geisha* to indicate “Japanese women wearing *kimono*” in general. (Kogure 2008)

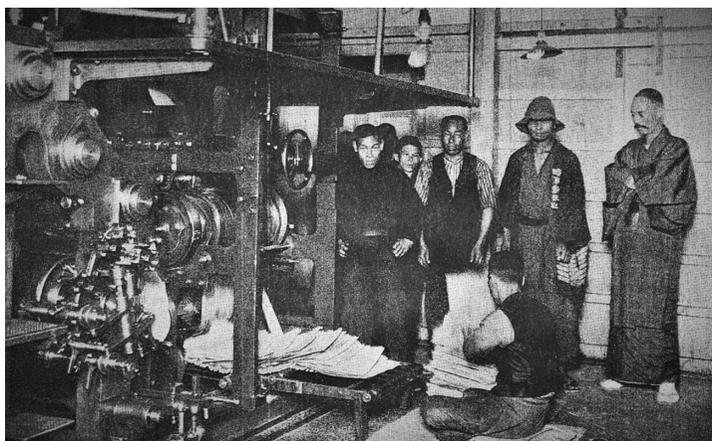


Figure 4 MAKING OF A JAPANESE NEWSPAPER : THE PRESS
 (Thomas E. Green, "The Making of a Japanese Newspaper," *National Geographic Magazine* 38.4 [October 1920], p.332)

book compiled by a Japanese manufacturer during the Meiji era. (Kogure 2008 : 55-57) Kogure even specified a Japanese photographer, Kiyoshi Sakamoto, as another major source of photographs of Japan for the *NGM*. Sakamoto was a male Japanese photographer who was well informed about the images of Japan demanded by the *NGM* as his regular patron. Given this fact, Kogure insightfully points out that the *NGM*'s photographic representation of the Japanese, specifically of Japanese women, could be seen as a product of "self-orientalism" conducted by a Japanese man. In other words, a Japanese male photographer such as Sakamoto, who, in order to sell his pictures to his Western customers, unconsciously copied and demonstrated the Western gaze on the "Oriental other" through the production of his photography. (Kogure 2008 : 57)

After "Glimpses of Japan," however, few articles include photographs of *geisha* girls. For instance, Eliza R. Scidmore's "Young Japan" (Scidmore 1914), one of articles during this period, features the pictures of Japanese "young children" as its title indicates. Also, in the case of "Some Aspects of Rural Japan" written by Walter Weston (Weston 1922), pictures represent male and female peasants, shrines, temples, traditional events such as the Aoi Festival, and scenes of individuals engaged in daily housework such as cooking. As another curious example of photographic representation of the Japanese in the 1920s, there is a report about the "making of a Japanese newspaper:" (Green 1920) The central photographic subject of this article is not female *geisha*, but male workers, who work printing newspapers. [fig.4] The written text of this article includes a general history of Japanese journalism and newspapers, describing the foundation and the internal organization of a Japanese major newspaper company, *Jiji-Shimpo* (『時事新報』).

From the time of its establishment, it has been an unwritten rule that the men who compose the editorial staff...shall be graduates of the university. Every facility is afforded young men whose choice of profession

is journalism to prepare themselves while in college for their future work. (Green 1920 : 329)

Implying that the chief workers of the newspaper company were young males, this article, at the same time, emphasizes that these male workers belongs to the elite class of Japanese society. This article also states as follows :

The making of newspapers is an art that...belongs exclusively to modern...civilization. That Japan should, in the very few years since her modern metamorphosis, have so speedily caught up with the van of periodical publication is less wonderful when one remembers that the Orient is the birthplace of the “art preservative,” and that China possesses the oldest newspaper in the world. (Green 1920 : 327)

Thus, while admiring the old civilization in China and the Orient, this article praises the “rapid” modernization of Japan through mentioning the quick development of the Japanese periodical industry. On the other hand, this article refers to the founder of *Jiji-Shimpo*, Yukichi Fukuzawa, as a “Samurai” who “devoted himself to the herculean task of Americanizing Japan,” for, to him, “America was always the ideal among the nations.” (Green 1921 : 327)

Thus, in the *NGM*'s narrative framework during this period, the successful modernization of Japan is frequently explained as the product of American influence. The following passage refers to the role of American missionaries in the modern history of the Hokkaido or Yezo :

The things of use, in agriculture and the arts, had already been widely distributed and copied, especially in that new part of the empire called the Hokkaido (Yezo), which throughout bears a very American aspect. ... Even more impressive to the student of Japan's evolution were the personnel and equipment of at least five of the first American missionaries. (Griffis 1923 : 417)

The author also states, “Back of all [evolutions of Japan] was the nation's youth, with its vigor, its innate capacity to select, adopt, adapt, and become adepts. Both geologically and in human history, Japan is the youngest country in Asia.” (Griffis 1923 : 419) Additionally, in the early part of this article, there is another expression. “For Japan's development, ...[f]irst and greatest of all [reasons] was the new mind created long ago by the Oyomei philosophy...” (Griffis 1923 : 415) Thus, around the period before and after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, the *NGM* described Japan using words such as “youth,” “vigor”, “young” and “new.” Through utilizing rhetoric represented by these words, the *NGM*'s articles successfully construct an image of Japan as a young, vigorously developing nation, which is expected to become “the chief medium in the union and reconciliation of the Orient and the Occident for the making of a new world.” (Griffis 1923 : 443)

Regarding American influence on Japan described in the *NGM*'s narrative structure, there is another inter-



Figure 5 THE “ATHLETIC GIRL” IN JAPAN
(William R. Castle Jr., “Tokyo To-day,” *National Geographic Magazine* 61.2 [February 1932], p. 159)

esting example in the 1930s. In 1932, the *NGM* covered Japanese urban life for the first time. In the article entitled “Tokyo To-day,” William R. Castle Jr., a former ambassador to Japan, reports on celebration held in March 1930 commemorating “the official completion of the reconstruction of Tokyo,” (Castle 1932 : 131) which had undergone rapid recovery after it had been thoroughly destroyed by the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake. This article includes some aerial photographs depicting Tokyo reconstructed as a “modern” city. The caption attached to one of the photographs portraying the march of advertisement floats and a mob surrounding them says, “‘IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE’-IN JAPAN AS IN AMERICA”. (Castle 1932 : 139) In similar other examples, the *NGM* in the 1930s makes frequent comparisons between Japan and the US and describes how local Japanese people are eager to learn the American way of life. “When I was in Tokyo an American team arrived to teach the Japanese how to play baseball. I hope the Americans scored a few runs ; they certainly won no games.” (Castle 1932 : 156) This is a typical manner used to claim the positive impact of American culture upon Japan. Also, presenting a picture of “the athletic girl in Japan,” this article claims that the import of Western-style athletics even prompted “racial” improvement of Japanese youths. “More characteristics of modern Tokyo are the athletic fields, where young Japan is building up strong bodies.” (Castle 1932 : 156) The girl in one of the attached pictures, [fig.5] whose muscular body possesses unfeminine qualities as she stands with a javelin in her hand, represents a transformative image of the Japanese youth, who obtained their “new” identity as a “superior” race because of the influence of American civilization.

4. Pacific War and the *NGM*

In the early 1940s, however, the tone of such “self-admiration” of the *NGM*, in other words, this magazine’s indirect praise of America underscoring how successfully American had achieved the modernization of Japan by giving it proper guidance and influence, began to show a gradual shift. For years before December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked the American naval fleet at Pearl Harbor and the so-called Pacific War began, most Americans had exhibited a lack of interest in the war, which they even had called “Europe’s War.” (Abramson 175) Articles produced in the late 1930s were “openly sympathetic to national socialist agendas,” avoiding covering the human suffering in keeping with the official policy. In a similar fashion, the early coverage of World War II was a “curious overextension of tact and nonpartisanship.” (Lutz and Collins 1993 : 33) Before 1939, when Hitler invaded Poland and France and Britain declared war on Germany, the National Geographic Society even showed pro-fascist sympathies. (Abramson 1987 : 175)

With the US participation to World War II, the *NGM*’s coverage “was marked by the same patriotic fervor as in World War I.” (Lutz and Collins 1993 : 33) This magazine’s contribution during the war, however, was not characterized by the undisguised war propaganda but rather by its extensive distribution of “maps.” “National Geographic Society maps, tacked up in kitchens, in dens, in youngsters’ bedrooms all over this nation, enabled an entire generation of Americans to chart the daily progress of World War Two.” (Bryan 1987 : 246) While the National Geographic Society’s official history describes in this way, it does not mean that the magazine never presented its “patriotic fervor” (Lutz and Collins 1993 : 33) in its pages. Rather, while observing Grosvenor’s seven principles, the *NGM* tactically portrayed Japan as the war enemy through reproducing and manipulating conventional, familiar images of Japan, which appeared in past issues.

For instance, in the article entitled “Unknown Japan” in the August issue in 1942, the author Willard Price describes Japan as follow :

Japan’s great advantage over us is that she knows us and we do not know her. “Know thine enemy” is the first maxim of war, just as “Know thy neighbor” is the essential of a world at peace. ...The Japanese have been our pupils and adopted our ways. We fancy that we have taught them all they know. Therefore we see them as being like us—on a smaller scale, of course. ...The mirror that has baffled and fooled us covers the secret Japan. The Japanese have exerted every effort to keep us from breaking through the looking glass and entering their strange world. (Price 1942 : 225)

Price emphasizes the US’s “limited” knowledge of Japan in contrast to the Japanese’s abundant knowledge of American language and culture with a tone of alarm. This kind of contrast is also expressed in other parts of this article. “The Japanese language makes understanding difficult. During five years in Japan my wife and I learned to speak some Japanese but never to read or write it, except in the simplified *kana*.” (Price 1942 : 225) Follow-

ing this passage, the author describes a Japanese student's astonishing knowledge of English :

Of course there are more than three persons in the United States who know Japanese. But the number is infinitesimal in comparison with the number of persons in Japan who know English. ... "Don't they teach Japanese in your schools?" a Japanese student asked me wonderingly. ...Stacked in the corner of an Imperial University student's room I saw these books, all in English : *Literary Taste*, By Arnold Bennett ; *Twice Told Tales*, by Hawthorne ; *Pygmalion*, by Shaw ; *Not That It Matters*, by Milne ; *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, by Stevenson ; *The Playboy of the Western World*, by Synge ; *The Essays of Elia*, by Lamb ; *Sesame and Lilies*, by Ruskin.

He had read them all. (Price 1942 : 225-226)

As the very last sentence indicates, the contrast between the US and Japan, especially the gap in knowledge the US has yet to fill regarding Japan as opposed to Japan's vast knowledge of the US indicated the growing threat that Japan was becoming at that time. In other words, the Japanese people's extensive knowledge of English is a product of Japan's modernization which, according to the *NGM*'s narrative framework, was accelerated under US influence. However, the highly developed language skill of Japanese youths, now, can become a threat to the US and the world society. Indeed, Price states, "Japan is no longer a frog in a well. She now sees the whole world—and wants it." (Price 1942 : 230)

Another article, "Japan and the Pacific" (Grew 1944) also claims the unknown, enigmatic aspect of the Japanese by making a contrast. "The Japanese dress as we do, and in many respects they live and act as we do... But they don't think as we do, and nothing can be more misleading than to try to measure by Western yardsticks the mentality of the average Japanese and his reaction to any given set of circumstances." (Grew 1944 : 385) The author, Joseph C. Grew, who was a former United States Ambassador to Japan, continues, "We who have lived in Japan for 10, or 20, or even 40 years, know at least how comparatively little we really do know of the thinking processes of the Japanese." (Grew 1944 : 385) Through these descriptions, the deep cognitive gulf between Japan and the US is repeatedly emphasized. In this case, the modern, Westernized look of the Japanese, according to the *NGM*, may function to conceal their alien, vicious nature.

While the text parts accentuate the enigmatic character of Japanese people like in the above, the photographs, on the other hand, convey a different message. In Willard Price's "Unknown Japan," which claims that Japan is "no longer a frog in a well" on the one hand, the illustration attached to that part which is a picture of the Gion festival in Kyoto suggests a different underlying message. The caption of the photograph says ; "Sometimes fifty men tug and labor for an hour to swing the temple-on-wheels around a curve in the Gion parade. Shintoism, really ancestor worship, teaches unswerving loyalty to the Emperor. To die for his Emperor means honor and glory for the Japanese soldier and his family." (Price 1942 : 230) Thus, the image of the Gion parade

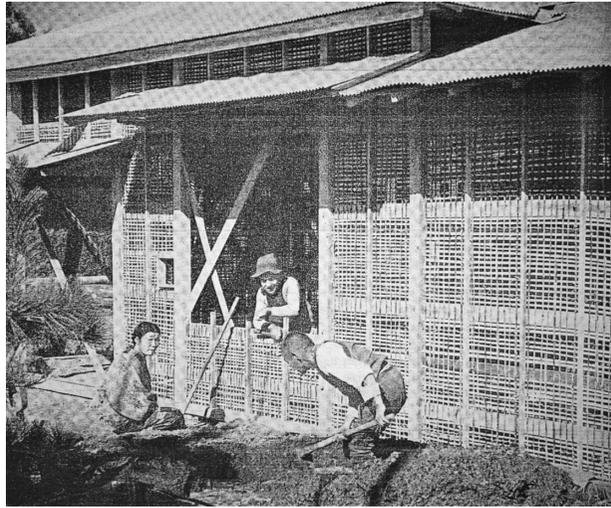


Figure 6 One Reason Why the Japanese Worry About Air Raids
(Willard Price, “Unknown Japan,” *National Geographic Magazine*
82.2 [August 1942], p.226)

is here connected to the idea of Shintoism as a philosophical source of a Japanese dreadful custom ; the “death for honor” (玉碎). As I mentioned before, images of shrines and temples were commonly used in the past articles. However, the meaning of Japanese religion is, here, reinterpreted as the source of Japanese people’s irrational attitudes. Curiously, in the page prior to this part, there is a picture of a Japanese traditional house under construction. (Price 1942 : 226) [fig.6] Through displaying the “bamboo lattice work for the walls,” and with the caption, “One Reason Why the Japanese Worry about Air Raids,” it indicates how Japanese traditional-style houses are vulnerable to air raids, and as a hidden message, implies the backwardness of Japanese civilization despite its manifestation of the modern capital city.

In this way, utilizing both texts and photographs that do not have direct connections to each other, Price’s article represents both the strength and the inadequacies of Japan through his comparison with the US, and as a result successfully inflates both the fear and the feelings of superiority of American readers. Additionally, inserting pictures of Japanese tourist spots such as a photograph of boiling eggs in a hot spring, and some aspects of old lifestyles such as a traditional-style heater called a *kotatsu*, this article emphasizes their archaic ways in an attempt to imbue the reader of that period with a sense of safety. It is also interesting to note that this article includes only few photographs directly suggesting the outbreak of the Pacific War. One of the few signs of the war outbreak is the painted wall advertisement displayed over the entrance of a movie theater. While the headline part of this picture’s caption, “Go to this Newsreel Theater in Yokohama and See the War---Japanese Version,” (Price 1942 : 233) implies the Japanese government’s propaganda control of foreign films, the rest of the caption, “Although Japan is a major producer, Hollywood films always were popular in the Empire’s numerous

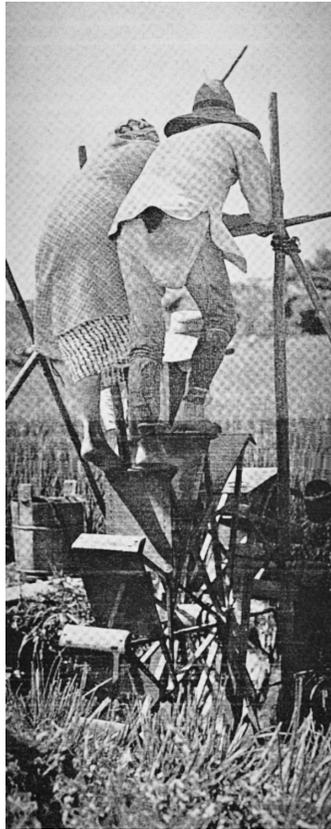


Figure 7 Both Husband and Wife Tread Water to the Precious Rice
(Joseph C. Grew, "Japan and the Pacific," *National Geographic Magazine* 85. 4 [April 1944], p.411)

theaters before the war. Interpreters gave a running explanation of the plot during each showing of an American film, or Japanese words were printed on the edge of the film," scarcely is related to the war.

In the early 1940s articles, we can find another characteristic of photographs of the Japanese. In an article entitled "Japan and the Pacific" published in April 1944, quite a few "back shots" of Japanese people are included. [fig.7] In these back shots, people's "faces" cannot be seen from the eyes of the audience. The author of the article, Joseph C. Grew, again, emphasizes the faceless, enigmatic character of Japanese people as follows :

The Japan which I came to know in those years was far different from the picturesque country described by John Luther Long or Lafcadio Hearn. The wild countryside had been crisscrossed by an imposing network of hydroelectric projects and power lines. The ferocious—but to Westerners, somewhat absurd—two sworded warriors had been put in drab, ill-fitting modern dress, and were coldly, formidably efficient.
(Grew 1944 : 390)



Figure 8 Women Workers Test Incandescent Bulbs for Foreign Trade
(Joseph C. Grew, “Japan and the Pacific,” *National Geographic Magazine* 85. 4 [April 1944], p.390)

Updating American stereotypical images of Japan, Grew does not forget to make a mock of the ferocious, but absurd-looking “two-sworded warriors.” Also, while recognizing Japan as the war enemy, Grew, at the same time, refers to the beauty of Japanese nature and landscapes he enjoyed in the past. “Here and there, the natural and--I hope--enduring beauty of Japan shone through. Even in time of war, I cannot help remembering the breath-taking symmetry of Fuji...” (Grew 1944 : 390) The picture in the page including this claim is, however, a dark, creepy image of female workers who are checking incandescent bulbs for foreign trade in a factory’s darkened room. [fig.8] Grew says, “Japan is civilized, in her own way. ...its culture has a streak of brutality and subservience in it which makes Japanese ideals alien to ours or to the ideals of the Chinese, or any other of her neighbors.” (Grew 1944 : 390) Thus, accentuating the unusualness of Japanese civilization, the author impresses on the reader’s mind the image of the incomprehensible, unpredictable, and therefore, threatening presence of the Japanese.

Interestingly, the narrative structure during the Pacific War is sustained within the *NGM* stories even after the end of the war in a slightly different manner. In 1945, William Price, the author of “Unknown Japan” in 1942, contributed another article about Japan entitled “Behind the Mask of Modern Japan” (Price 1945) to the November 1945 issue. The following is the opening part of this article :

Many things in the behavior of Japanese soldiers have puzzled American fighters and their Allies in the Pa-

cific. Certainly Japanese warships, planes, and ordnance were modern enough to give us plenty of trouble. Japanese soldiers dress in modern uniforms, even if they look slovenly, and they handle modern weapons. (Price 1945 : 513)

As this passage illustrates, the *NGM* cannot but praise Japanese modernity because, observing the *NGM*'s consistency in its narrative structure, it is a fine product of American influence. However, the author continues, "But the man inside! 'He belongs to another planet,' one American officer says. And a GI remarked, 'He's way off the beam.'" (Price 1945 : 513) Price, while affirming the success of Japanese modernization, emphasizes the alien, incomprehensible aspects of the Japanese people. "It was astonishing to find here, behind the modern front of Japan, customs and beliefs that belonged to a primitive stage of man's development." As this claim reveals, the standard of the Japanese is attributed to this nation's primitiveness based on the traditional idea of "evolutionary ladders" ascending higher "from the savagery of Dahomeyan culture to the more civilized Japanese, to the Chinese and Japanese." (Lutz and Collins 1993 : 25) Among 14 pictures in total, 6 images are related to the topics of Buddhism or Shintoism. One depicts a temple of a "fox cult" (*Inari*)¹⁰ built on a top of a department store in Tokyo. (Price 1945 : 523) Another represents a scene where a Shinto priest "Purifies Pilgrims to Fuji." (Price 1945 : 527) These "religious" images are readily associated with the superstitious disposition of Japanese people, which the textual explanation frequently mentions to impress on the American readers the irrationality of Japanese ways.

There is another article about Japan published in 1945. The very first photograph of "Face of Japan" (Moore 1945), for instance, portrays an American soldier who puts his finger on a diorama of the Yokohama naval base.[fig.9] The contrast between the body size of the soldier and the smallness of the diorama successfully impresses on the readers the absolute dominance of the US over Japan. However, when you turn the page, you see a photograph portraying a beautiful landscape of Mt. Fuji and Suruga Bay. This picture has little relevance to the textual explanation, which gives a detailed description of Japan's geographical features as information useful for the future territorial occupation by the US government. Next to this picture of Mt. Fuji is an aerial view of a ruined Osaka city, which was burned down in four major raids by the US air force during the war. The extreme contrast between these two images, which are laid out across two adjacent pages, symbolically informs us of the unchanging value of Japan's natural (or primitive) beauty as well as the defeat of Japan still entrenched in its pre-war modernity.

A similarity between these two articles is that there are few pictures focusing on Japanese men. In the numerous pictures of these two articles, Japanese men are always depicted in a crowd or in the background, not as the subject of the picture. Contrary to this, there are some portraits of women that draw the readers' attention.

¹⁰ *Inari* or *Oinari* (稲荷大神) is the Japanese kami foxes of fertility and of general prosperity. Interestingly, Price selects the term "cult" to indicate the *kami* of Shinto in his writing.



Figure 9 An American Gulliver Puts His Finger on a Lilliput Jap Naval Base (W. Robert Moore, “Face of Japan,” *National Geographic Magazine* 88.6 [December 1945], p.754)

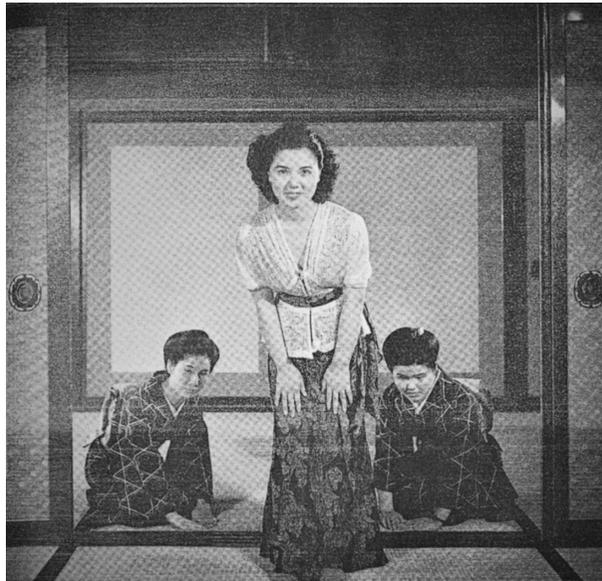


Figure 10 A Modern Geisha Curtseys to a Client ; Her Old-style Aids Bow until Noses Touch Floor (Willard Price, “Behind the Mask of Modern Japan,” *National Geographic Magazine* 88.5 [November 1945], p.535)

The most impressive one is the photograph printed on the last page of “Behind the Mask of Modern Japan.” [fig.10] In this picture, a young Japanese woman dressed in Western-style clothes steps forward between two women wearing traditional *kimono* bowing deeply on a *tatami* mat. As this picture and its caption, “A Modern

Geisha Curtsies to a Client ; Her Old-style Aids Bow until Noses Touch Floor,” simultaneously represent that the *NGM* in the post-war period begins to portray the Japanese as a nation that eventually has succeeded their collective metamorphoses from a half-modern nation into a perfectly modernized one under the influence of America. In the post-war narrative of the *NGM*, the sense of supremacy of the American audience over Japan is, again, firmly secured.

Conclusion

In his book, Shuzo Kogure summarizes the general history of the *NGM*'s photographic representation before the Pacific War as follows :

Before the Pacific War, “the Japanese” were represented as *geisha* girls. Indeed, in the context of the critique of Orientalism or the theory of feminism, critics often claim that the East in general tended to be described symbolically as women, who could be an object of sexual exploitation by Westerners. However, during the Pacific War, “the Japanese” began to be portrayed as men who antagonized the West. At that time, “your enemy” Japan did not take the form of a woman wearing a *kimono*, but as a man wearing a military uniform. (Kogure 2008 : 83)

The historical survey of the *NGM* which I conducted in the previous sections, however, tells us a slightly different story. In its very early stage, the *NGM*'s photography was used merely as the objective, subordinate illustrations of its covered subjects in order to express the “scientific” authenticity of its articles. During that period, the chief photographic subjects were not women, but rather men. Such objective, dehumanized portrayals of Japanese men can be interpreted drawing on David L. Eng's theory of “racial castration.” According to Eng, in the Western imagination there is a fantasy “that makes *Oriental* and *masculine* antithetical terms.” (Eng 2001 : 2) (Italics in the original) Eng says, “[T]he Asian American male is both materially and psychically feminized within the context of a larger U.S. cultural imaginary.” When we apply this theory to the *NGM*'s representation of the Japanese, the dehumanized portrayals of Japanese men in the very early issues of the *NGM* can be understood as an act of erasing masculine aspects of Japanese men. In this light, it is quite symbolic that the early *NGM* articles preferred to include pictures of Japanese male monks. Thus, displays of Western Orientalism may not only be expressed through photographic representations of *geisha* or a sexually exploitable female as critics often argue, but also through strategically displaying conventionally non-masculine photographic representations of Japanese men.

Such an “objective” role of photographs gradually changed in the course of history. In the case of photographic representations of Japanese people during the 1930s and 1940s, both the texts and the photographs collaboratively constructed an ambiguous image of Japan and the Japanese, which worked to justify American



Figure 11 Back to Japan Goes a Boatload of Colonists, Uprooted from Homes in Korea (Blair A. Walliser, “Sunset in the East,” *National Geographic Magazine* 89.6 [June 1946], p. 808)

audience’s antagonism toward Japan as well as to satisfy their curiosity for the Far-Eastern exotic country. Based on such an ambivalent feeling, Japan was often portrayed as a beautiful, young, and therefore, backward country, and later, as a nation which successfully achieved its modernization under the positive influence of the US. But, particularly after the opening of the Pacific War, American audience’s positive curiosity about Japan was transformed into fear of the enigmatic country, which changed the portrayals of the Japanese into incomprehensible, creepy, menacing people.

According to Kogure, the *NGM*’s representation of the Japanese “reverted to *geisha* girls” again after the end of the Pacific War. (Kogure 2008 : 83) Regarding this, however, examination of the articles published in the late 1940s also reveals that things are not so simple. One article during this period, “Sunset in the East,” for instance, presents no pictures of *geisha* or *samurai*. Most pictures in this article captures a crowd of people involving both men and women, children and adults, and even Americans and Japanese. Among these pictures, there is an impressive photograph of a Japanese woman who, wearing thick glasses, holding her new-born baby, sits on the crowded deck of a repatriation ship going back to Japan from Korea. [fig.11] While her round glasses associate us with a typical caricature of “the Jap” or a Japanese male soldier produced as a part of American war propaganda, she, who stares directly into the camera or toward the viewer, is not a man but a woman. The detailed caption attached to this image reveals a hidden, sad reality behind this image :

They prepare their first meal at sea around a small fire on the crowded deck. On repatriation ship, the

Enoshima Maru, carrying 4,300 Japs, sank on January 23, 1946, after it struck a mine 60 miles off the mouth of the Yangtze. All persons, except 20 killed in the explosion, were transferred to the near-by American freighter *Brevard*. (Walliser 1946 : 809)

The positive tone of this caption, which indirectly applauds the American freighter's rescue of Japanese refugees, consequently conceals the fear, despair, and exhaustion that the people in the photograph must have felt at sea. Indeed, the chief theme of this article's text is Japan's introduction to American democracy. "Perhaps never before in the history has any fighting people accepted so humbly and obediently the will of a conqueror. And the answer to this is the deep, insatiate desire of the Japanese to be better than he is." (Walliser 1946 : 797) As this quotation indicates, this article emphasizes the Japanese's accepting and obedient attitude toward American way of life. Such description, however, also conceals the memory of the bloody battlefield, military hostilities and racial antagonism expressed between the two nations during the wartime.

Despite such rhetorical strategies of the *NGM* as presented in its captions and written text, which highly bias or, sometimes, distort the readers' understanding of photographic images, the sharp look of the Japanese mother in the picture I described above does not lose its impact. It is probably because photography is the medium which "voraciously records anything in view" (Price and Wells 2000 : 16) by its nature. In other words, photography, which inevitably captures and records any details of things, maintains its spontaneous power of revealing the truth of reality even when it is exposed to the powerful influence of surrounding rhetorical expressions. Also, the *NGM*'s representation of Japan, while involving typical stereotypes such as geisha and samurai as presented by Shuzo Kogure's study, also possesses inscrutable complexity utilizing various strategies of expression. From these standpoints, it is sometimes problematic to place excessive focus on typical stereotypes such as geisha or samurai, particularly when we try to understand the holistic system of discourse surrounding the *NGM*'s representation of Japan and the Japanese. We, instead, should pay more attention to the complex interaction between text and visual images and how the manner in which they are interwoven can create a narrative that is enabled within a specific sociocultural and historical context. By bringing to light how the *NGM* tactically manipulates both text and visual imagery we may penetrate the concealed media strategy that possess the power to influence how people perceive the cultural "other."

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【Abstract】

「美しき敵国」の謎——明治・大正・昭和初期の
『ナショナル・ジオグラフィック』誌における日本の写真表象

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本論は、北米の大衆雑誌『ナショナル・ジオグラフィック』に、創刊時から1940年代までに掲載された日本および日本人の表象について、写真と文章の相互作用に注目しつつ分析するものである。『ナショナル——』誌における日本人表象の先行研究としては、ステレオタイプの「ゲイシャ」や「サムライ」としての表象に焦点を当て、その歴史の変遷をポストコロニアリズムの観点から分析した例がある。しかし、『ナショナル——』誌の日本表象を創刊時までさかのぼり、太平洋戦争終結前後までの日本に関する表現に見られる傾向や特徴を子細にたどってみると、「ゲイシャ」や「サムライ」という定型化したアイコンはさほど前景化されていないことが分かる。それよりもむしろ、写真表象と文字テキストとの複雑な相互関係を通じて、アメリカの揺るがぬ優位性をほめかすと同時に、日本の脅威と後進性、そして「謎」の国としてのエキゾチズムを複合的に暗示するような、『ナショナル——』誌独特の表象体系の存在を確認することができるのである。

キーワード：『ナショナル・ジオグラフィック』誌、写真表象、日本人イメージ、戦争プロパガンダ、人種的ステレオタイプ

This paper examines the media strategy of an American popular magazine, the *National Geographic Magazine*, particularly focusing on the photographic representations of Japan between the end of the 19th century and the 1940s. According to Shuzo Kogure, prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War, this magazine tended to predominantly use the images of *geisha* girls and after the war broke out, the images of *geisha* girls were replaced by traditional images of the *samurai*. However, the chronological survey of the *NGM*'s photographs during this period reveals a different story. Particularly, those articles about Japan published during the 1930s and 1940s, utilizing both text and photographs collaboratively, construct ambiguous images of Japan. This appears to justify the American audience's antagonism toward Japan while also satisfying their curiosity for this Far-Eastern country that seemed as both exotic and at times threatening.

Key words: *National Geographic Magazine*, photographic representations, images of the Japanese, war propaganda, racial stereotypes

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