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The end of the war brought the anthropologists back to the campuses but with empty notebooks, and the American Anthropologist reflected this lack of a research backlog for the first few years of our period.

ROBERT MURPHY | 1976

TWO WORLD WAR II’S LONG SHADOW

Due to wartime publishing interruptions, Cora Du Bois’s prewar ethnography of eastern Indonesian culture, *The People of the Alor*, was not published until 1944. A decade and a half after the war’s end, she wrote an appendix to the original preface that briefly broke disciplinary standards muting discussions of ways that anthropology had intersected with the war. The years between writing *People of Alor* and its 1960 republication had been active ones for Du Bois. She began the war in Washington at OSS headquarters, using her 1930s ethnographic fieldwork experiences to inform her war knowledge of Indonesia; she later relocated to Ceylon, at an OSS base where she directed operations in Malaysia, southern China, Siam, and Burma (Seymour 2015).

Du Bois’s updated appendix acknowledged that the people of Alor described in her book were forever changed by the war and by their prewar contact with her. She wrote that after the war’s end she received a “jovial, almost flippant letter” from “a young controleur who was sent to Alor during the Dutch interregnum before Indonesia achieved independence.” This young man asked for a copy of her ethnography and passed along news of the island, with some details of the Japanese occupation during the war (Du Bois 1960: xiv). He described how the Japanese had established a station and run patrols near the village, Atimelang, where Du Bois had lived and conducted her fieldwork in 1937–39. He wrote to Du Bois that one day, the Japanese command learned that the leaders of Atimelang “were claiming that Hamerika would win the war”—Hamerika being how they pronounced the name of the strange, distant land from which Du Bois had traveled to live among them. Du Bois added that the notion that the great house of Hamerika would win the war
could have been nothing but the most innocent fantasy to my friends in Atimelang since they had never even heard of the United States prior to my arrival. But to the Japanese, suffering from all the nervous apprehensions of any occupying power in a strange and therefore threatening environment, such talk could mean only rebellion. . . . so the Japanese sent troops to arrest five of my friends in Atimelang. I am not sure who all of them were from the young controleur’s letter, but apparently Thomas Malelaka, and the Chief of Dikimpe were among them. In Kalabahi they were publicly decapitated as a warning to the populace.

There is no end to the intricate chain of responsibility and guilt that the pursuit of even the most arcane social research involves. (1960: iv–v)

The personal responsibility Du Bois assumed for her indirect involvement in the execution of these five people was remarkable and arguably beyond a reasonable interpretation of individual guilt; but in acknowledging the rampant killing unleashed in the Second World War, Du Bois broke a fourth wall of postwar ethnographic writing in ways that were unusual for her time. This wall supported the standard narrative contrivance in which not only the ethnographer as a person but also the geopolitical events impacting fieldwork were removed from the focus of the text. Ethnographies adopted tones presenting objective accounts of a natural world where the scientist-ethnographers were neutral observers. Du Bois’s blunt acknowledgment that anthropology was part of “the intricate chain of responsibility and guilt” linked to even the “most arcane social research,” with generally unacknowledged atrocities and lesser consequences, was reminiscent of Kipling’s lama warning Kim that he had “loosed an act upon the world, and as a stone thrown into a pool so spread the consequences thou canst not tell how far” (1922: 334). Many postwar ethnographic works all but erased the war and its wake of slaughter from their narratives. The consistency of the ways that post–World War II ethnographers glossed over the war’s transformative impacts informs us about the world in which they wrote.

**The Postwar Ethnographic World**

Postwar anthropological works recorded and ignored the war’s impacts in varying ways. Some efforts, like Joseph Tenenbaum’s interviews with survivors and others linked to Nazi concentration camps, appearing in the book *In Search of a Lost People* (1946), were works of tragic salvage ethnography, while other works moved the war’s impacts beyond the horizon of the ethnographic present. Some ethnographers studied impacts of the war in New Guinea and elsewhere. Ian
Hogbin’s *Transformation Scene: The Changing Culture of a New Guinea Village* (1951) described how the war and the postwar period shaped the villages of New Guinea. Cyril Belshaw’s book *The Great Village* (1957) chronicled New Guinea villagers’ efforts to rebuild and reestablish their village after it was destroyed during the war. Anthropological studies of cargo cults connected these millennial movements with villagers’ experiences with GI culture during the war.

Kenneth Read described how the Japanese, British, and Australian wartime occupations impacted the peoples of New Guinea’s Markham Valley, noting that the Japanese, who also “possessed the white man’s weapons,” were initially viewed much as the European occupiers had been (Read 1947: 98). Read was reproached for the Europeans’ hypocrisy that forbade locals to fight, yet “Europeans were engaged in a war with another people” (Read 1947: 99). Anthropologists studied how the war disrupted traditional New Guinea subsistence and altered local foodways (Read 1947; Hogbin 1951).

The Australian government had worried that native loyalties could easily shift during the war. One government report on Japanese interactions with Aborigines noted that aboriginals “openly stated that the Japs told them that the country belonged to the blacks, had been stolen from them by the whites and that ‘bye bye’ they (the Japs) would give it back to them (the blacks). In fact, the writer suggested that whoever supplied ‘food and tobacco’ would have the support of the Aborigines” (Gray 2005: 19).

Micronesians first endured Japanese occupations, then an American liberation that became an occupation. In regions where indigenous populations prior to the war had been pacified under the forces of colonialism, the war sometimes found old and new colonial managers rolling back otherwise strictly enforced prohibitions against traditional forms of warfare and other forms of violence (D. H. Price 2008a: 71–72). For those living in the war’s path, the end of the war did not bring peace or freedom as much as it brought new relationships of control and domination.

The war transformed the settings of postwar ethnographies around the world. Cultures of Melanesia, Indonesia, and the Philippines experienced combat and occupations, while North African cultures from Morocco to Egypt were caught in the middle of American and European battles. Cornelius Osgood’s book *The Koreans and Their Culture* mixed war zone ethnography with lengthy discussions of the Japanese, Russian, and American occupations of the twentieth century, along with sympathetic narratives explaining why villagers would be drawn to align with communism. With acknowledgments thanking Dean Acheson and Edgar Furniss, Osgood noted that attempts “to undertake independent
research under the aegis of a military occupation should be avoided if possible for, though cooperation is generous and sincere, it can be even more confusing than the complications of operating as an alien in a country at war” (1951: 9).

**Bringing the War Back Home**

After the armistice, American soldiers returned home and resumed civilian life. Most anthropologists who had served the war in an alphabet soup of military and intelligence agencies returned to universities, museums, and other civilian workplaces. Classrooms were soon packed with students entering college under the GI Bill. Many anthropologists returned to teaching, and large universities and small colleges expanded curriculum to meet the demands for the growing postwar interest in anthropology courses. A 1947 article in the *News Bulletin of the American Anthropological Association* described how even small colleges expanded their anthropology course offerings and required anthropological faculty to meet the growing demand for courses (NBAAA 1947 1[3]: 45).1

Not all anthropologists returned to the classrooms they had left for the war. After the war’s end, some continued working in military or civilian positions like those they held during the war. Others applied anthropology to the managerial problems the American victors faced in managing lands they now occupied. Some anthropologists worked on postwar projects in Europe, Asia, or the Pacific. Some continued the work they had done for military intelligence agencies, at times extending questionable methodologies forged in the heat of wartime.

Some scholars repurposed wartime data for peacetime academic research. At Harvard, E. A. Hooton and (future CIA anthropologist) J. M. Andrews analyzed fifty thousand somatotype photographs of military inductees, hopelessly searching for correlations between body type and “education, occupation, military service and achievement” (NBAAA 1947, 1[4]: 49). In 1948, Weston La Barre received a Guggenheim Fellowship to write a book “on oriental character structure based on materials gathered during the war as an officer in [the Office of Naval Intelligence; ONI] and OSS (CB1 and SEAC), in China, India and Ceylon” (NBAAA 1948 2[3]: 43).2 La Barre published two papers from this OSS and ONI work in *Psychiatry*, on Japanese and Chinese personality types (La Barre 1945, 1946a, 1946b).

La Barre’s study of Chinese personality reduced the complexity of Chinese culture to brief caricatures. Such overly simplified cultural representations cir-
culated widely as classified memos during the war and helped inform or reinforce the views of military and intelligence personnel, but the publication of such an amateurish work in the peer-reviewed pages of *Psychiatry* after the war indicates the militarist milieu that remained in postwar academia. La Barre’s later work studying culture and personality among the Aymara showed levels of nuance and moderation of analysis distinct from the sort of army surplus analysis that he published after the war in *Psychiatry*.

The National Research Council (NRC) and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) funded the Library of Congress’s Document Expediting Project, which salvaged and declassified two thousand army, navy, and OSS civil affairs reports, which were distributed to American universities interested in using these materials for research (NBAAA 1947 1[3]: 34). In 1949, the army’s Historical Division sought anthropologists interested in analyzing a cache of military documents collected from overseas military outposts during the war (NBAAA 1949 3[1]: 13).

Alexander Leighton’s work bridged the Second World War and the Cold War in ways that illustrate how American social science remained connected to wartime themes. During the war, Leighton managed interned Japanese Americans at Poston, Arizona, and his published writings on his work at the Poston Detention Camp conveyed a detached, observational narrative tone. As described in his book *The Governing of Men*, Leighton strove to study human interactions as a neutral scientific observer measuring the variables of human culture, an effect designed to present this political act with a façade of scientific neutrality as if he were but a passive observer, not an inflicter, of “natural” processes (Leighton 1945; D. H. Price 2008a: 149–51).

Leighton’s *Human Relations in a Changing World: Observations on the Use of the Social Sciences* (1949) opened with an account of his December 1945 visit to Hiroshima, four months after its bombing. He described the remarks of the people he encountered, but his narrative was far from the sort of thick description that later anthropological writing would strive to achieve; instead, Leighton’s postwar Hiroshima was a world where tragic stories mixed with collections of information on human data points. Leighton approached the Japanese people as variables to be understood so that they could be altered to suit the needs of American interests, in the name of peace in a “changing world.” His ethnographic frame was carefully chosen, opening with a skeptical GI Jeep driver assuring him that Hiroshima was no different from any other bombed Japanese city, followed by descriptions of a nuclear bomb–decimated landscape,
children playing among ruins, the ways and means of his local Japanese hosts, and his own insistence that the bombing was no more of a crime against humanity than any other wartime bombardment.

Leighton visited Hiroshima while on assignment for the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, which continued collecting information on local populations after the war. Leighton’s encounters with survivors provided a composite ethnographic narrative of the experiences of the people of Hiroshima. He compiled shared memories of the calm morning before the attack, followed by the flash, the burning air, vaporized people, the shock, dying children, dying parents, and dead bodies everywhere. The vice mayor of a neighboring town told him how, after the bombing, “everybody looked alike. The eyes appeared to be a mass of melted flesh. The lips were split up and also looked like a mass of molten flesh. Only the nose appeared the same as before. The death scene was awful. The color of the patient would turn to blue and when we touched the body the skin would stick to our hands” (Leighton 1949: 29). The Strategic Bombing Survey’s sponsorship and anticipated consumption of Leighton’s report altered it from a neutral collection of stories into a sociocultural ballistics report detailing the outcomes of a calculated, intentional use of a new weapon. This transformation occurred not because Leighton’s narrative lacked human compassion (it had no such deficit) but because the context in which this agency consumed his narrative repurposed it as a part of dual use processes regardless of his compassion, sympathies, or intentions.

Leighton described the routinized processes for using data collected from Japanese prisoners of war: “Interrogation reports were coded and data dealing with morale factors and background information were reduced to punch cards which could be sorted and tabulated by machines. In addition to this, however, extracts were made from the reports and filed in two systems, one dealing with the morale of the fighting forces and the other with the home front” (1949: 83). Postarmistice Foreign Morale Analysis Division (FMAD) reports included attitudinal data measuring Japanese dissatisfaction as FMAD switched from attempting to spawn wartime insurgent movements to fearing postwar counterinsurgencies (e.g., Leighton 1949: 68).

*Human Relations in a Changing World* argued that a fundamental lesson learned at FMAD was that science could measure, explain, and control human behavior. Leighton took for granted that such social science control over society would be used for “the prevention of war and the promotion of workable relationships between nations” instead of for one nation or class to exploit the weaknesses of others, or for leaders to manipulate their own populations to sup-
port wars serving the interests of elites but not the populous manipulated into supporting and fighting them (Leighton 1949: 101). He advocated that the same sort of analytical techniques developed by FMAD be used by the U.S. government to solve domestic and international social problems. This work betrayed little awareness of the political dimensions of scientific research. Leighton did not acknowledge that individuals and groups used knowledge both for the greater good of all and for themselves; in the book’s conclusion, he conceded the existence of a “fear that social scientists will sell their skills to ‘conscienceless manipulators,’” and while not dismissing this as a possibility, he diluted such concerns, arguing that these dangers face all branches of science (207).

The Marshall Plan and Postwar Occupations

The Soviet’s Molotov Plan of 1947 brought postwar aid to Eastern Europe’s Soviet bloc, extending Soviet influence in ways similar to the relationships secured for the United States the following year under the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan launched the United States on a new soft power international interventionist trajectory linked to the Truman Doctrine. Named after Secretary of State George Marshall, a retired army general, and designed primarily by William Clayton and George Kennan at the State Department, the Marshall Plan’s European Recovery Program (ERP) funneled $13 billion to programs for rebuilding Western European economies and infrastructure. From 1947 to 1951, the ERP spent 3 percent of the U.S. GDP on Cold War European recovery projects (contrast this with the 0.19 percent of GDP the United States spends on all foreign aid; Keating 2014).

The Marshall Plan had general domestic bipartisan support, but on the political right, Senator Robert A. Taft, a Republican, opposed all forms of international aid; on the left, Henry Wallace criticized the plan as a Cold War tactic weakening labor movements, propping up private business interests, and increasing schisms between the United States and the Soviet Union. Michael Hogan, historian of the Marshall Plan wrote that Wallace viewed “the ERP as the work of American monopolists and imperialists who were seeking to promote their interests at home and overseas at the expense of social justice and world peace. Wallace denounced what he saw as the invasion of government by private business and financial leaders who had turned the State Department and other public agencies into servants of monopoly capital” (Hogan 1987: 94).

Wallace found cynical motives behind American plans to rebuild Europe, arguing that “Western European countries can no longer count on colonial loot
to sustain their customary standards of living. They must now earn their own way through reconstruction and expansion of their economies” (1948: 6). Wallace believed the Marshall Plan would “underwrite the military budgets of reactionary governments which will do the bidding of American private capital” (18). He criticized the ways the plan undermined European efforts to nationalize industries while empowering private trusts benefiting from the particulars of reconstruction and economic reforms as the plan pressed European nations toward adopting regionally integrated economic relations. Foreseeing critiques of Reaganomics, he argued, “We can draw a just parallel between the [European Recovery Plan] and the [Herbert] Hoover plans for combating depression here at home in the early 30’s. Both plans were based on the thoroughly discredited notion that you bolster the wealthy and entrenched interests, and benefits will automatically trickle down to the people” (17). Combined with coming NATO formations, the Marshall Plan entwined American global power and European economic reorganization in ways that sharply divided the world into the Cold War’s dichotomous camps of East and West.

The Marshall Plan brought stability to Western Europe, but it also re-formed Europe in a Cold War context adopting specific anticommunist, antisocialist political economic positions. The vision of the Marshall Plan would remain an attractive nuisance for various Cold War development schemes claiming to liberate the underdeveloped world from poverty.5

Some European anthropologists, like Pierre Bessaignet of France, worked for the Marshall Plan in their home countries, but anthropologists’ involvement with European reconstruction was not as widespread or centrally coordinated as were their involvements in the postwar Japanese occupation, or the Micronesian ethnographic explorations of the Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology group (CIMA) (Gaillard 2004: 188). These regional differences in anthropological contributions likely occurred for a combination of reasons, including larger numbers of available State Department personnel who were already familiar with the languages and cultures of Europe.

Occupations starkly demonstrate power relations, and anthropologists’ contributions to occupations reveal disciplinary alignments to power. Occupations during and after the war betrayed structural imbalances whose internal logics often suggested retribution could settle scores as wartime collaborators faced their countrymen and countrywomen, and postwar occupiers had to resist temptations to make losers pay for the personal losses the occupiers experienced.6
The American military leadership realized that the successful postwar occupation of Japan required significant knowledge about Japanese culture. With the passing of decades, many Americans came to view the occupation as a peaceful, smooth transition. As American strategists contemplated occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early twenty-first century, public discourse often nostalgically referred to the ease and success of the GHQ’s postwar occupation of Japan. Japan has been presented as a model occupation that brought peace to a war-torn nation by installing American-style democracy. Notions of a peaceful Japanese occupation were regularly contrasted with the clashing factions using improvised explosive devices to kill and maim American occupiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. Typical of these claims about the Japanese occupation is this passage from a New York Times essay from 2003, lamenting the absence of anthropologists to help guide the American occupation of Iraq: “As the occupation of Iraq appears more complex by the day, where are the new Ruth Benedicts, authoritative voices who will carry weight with both Iraqis and Americans?” (Stille 2003). While the occupation of postwar Japan brought relatively low levels of interpersonal or organizational violence directed against occupiers, there were other difficulties and forms of structural violence that such ebullient narratives conveniently neglect.

Many anthropologists have come to believe that Ruth Benedict and other anthropologists influenced decisions to allow the Japanese emperor to retain ceremonial power at the war’s end, and that The Chrysanthemum and the Sword, Benedict’s study of Japan, guided General Douglas MacArthur’s postwar occupation. While Benedict’s book has been read by millions of Japanese in the postwar period, there is no evidence that Benedict’s recommendations to spare the mikado had any direct impact on his fate — MacArthur and others already understood that the emperor should remain (D. H. Price 2008a: 171–99). Likewise, The Chrysanthemum and the Sword was not a central text influencing the Japanese occupation in the ways characterized by Stille and others. Like other anthropological counterinsurgency-linked texts, Chrysanthemum’s greatest impact was on the home front, as it helped frame American understandings of the conquered Japanese.

As John W. Dower’s Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II shows, the postwar occupation of Japan was far more complicated than as depicted in popular American retcon narratives. Dower documents a remarkably compliant occupied Japanese population that aligns with popular renderings, but he also reveals the incredible hardships and severe cultural annihilation that lay
behind this layer of “nonviolent” compliance, a compliance enforced by GHQ’s totalitarian control of traditional Japanese cultural and political processes.

Dower contrasted the sort of nuanced American academic approach to Japanese culture that emerged during the war as a new generation of “American and British anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists [entered] into the general areas of intelligence analysis and psychological warfare” (1999: 219) with that of the war’s elder generation of Asia experts, who concluded that the Japanese would be incapable of adopting democracy after the war. A cohort of American social scientists who recognized the malleability of enculturation processes and the innate forces of cultural relativism advocated for an occupation based on aggressive social engineering. An older generation of Asia experts with ties to the United Kingdom’s Royal Institute of International Affairs judged the Japanese as not being able to adopt democracy because they were an “obedient herd.” According to Dower, if this generation of “Asia experts had their way, the very notion of inducing a democratic revolution would have died of ridicule at an early stage. As happened instead, the ridicule was deflected by the views of experts of a different ilk — behavioral scientists who chose to emphasize the ‘malleability’ of the Japanese ‘national character,’ along with planners and policy makers of liberal and left-wing persuasions who sincerely believed that democratic values were universal in their nature and appeal” (1999: 218).

Dower speculated that had the emperor followed his advisers’ counsel and surrendered at the beginning of 1945, Japan not only would have avoided conventional, jellied gasoline, and atomic bombing campaigns but also might have avoided “the occupation’s revolution from above. As of early 1945, there was no plan to induce a democratic revolution in the defeated nation. The old Japan hands [e.g., British analysts] who still controlled post surrender planning anticipated a mild reform agenda at best” (220).

Dower reveals an American occupation full of brutalities and degradations, as the Japanese public were denigrated through programs like a government-organized prostitution operation supervised by the local police (1999: 124–26) and a collapse of the production and distribution of basic foodstuffs that was still so severe in October 1947 that a young, honest municipal judge died of starvation after refusing to purchase food on the black market (99). The United States’ refusal to shoulder the costs of occupation exacerbated Japanese hardships. In contrast to those living under the Marshall Plan in Europe, many Japanese starved as they were required to pay the costs of the American occupation, a burden that “amounted to a staggering one-third of the regular budget at the beginning of the occupation” (115).
In 1950, anthropologist George Foster was appointed to be the American Anthropological Association (AAA) delegate to the Commission on the Occupied Areas’ Second National Conference on the Occupied Countries (AA 1951 53[3]:456). Foster reported on conference presentations describing the state of American occupations of Austria, Germany, Japan, and the Ryukyus, in which he criticized American military officials’ grasp of the realities and problems of an occupation, and broad beliefs in faulty cultural engineering assumptions. Foster described a series of upbeat military-linked occupation reports making unrealistic claims of transformed occupied populations that fit Americans’ expectations. According to Foster:

The report of Col. Nugent on Japan was very discouraging because of the attitude and point of view. He painted a glowing picture in which everything is going beautifully in Japan and there are no problems. As a result of the U.S. program, Japanese character, personality and culture have been entirely changed during the past five years and they are well on the road to American democracy. The ethnocentric approach on the part of most delegates and officials toward all of the occupied countries was almost unbelievable. Nearly every discussion and comment was predicated on the assumption that American institutions are perfect and that success in the occupied countries consists only in recasting them more nearly in our own image. It was implied that what is wrong with Japanese culture is that it is so unlike American culture. . . . Japanese universities were thoroughly excoriated because they were copied after the European pattern and not the American pattern. Unquestionably, foreign nationals representing the occupied areas must have felt that most of the discussion was an unvarnished insult to their national cultures. (AA 1951 53[3]: 456–57)

Foster’s bitter assessment was ignored not only by American policy makers but also by some in the generation of coming applied anthropologists who avoided such assessments that directly countered American policy positions, instead adopting managerial views that better aligned with American policy.

Several American anthropologists conducted fieldwork in occupied Japan. Douglas Haring took a leave of absence from Syracuse University during 1951 and 1952 to serve on the NRC’s Pacific Science Board in the Ryukyus, where he worked on an army program documenting local culture. The Wenner-Gren Foundation later funded Haring’s research evaluating U.S.-backed reforms after the American occupation of Japan ended (J. W. Hall 1952: 293–94). Some Americans conducted community studies: Arthur Raper surveyed rural fishing communities, gathering information on the impacts of postoccupation land reform.
programs (see Raper et al. 1950); John Bennett modeled his research on Walter Goldschmidt’s ethnographic field research on California agricultural communities, as he studied neighborhood associations, the “labor boss” system, and “problems of ‘freedom and control’” in a rural forestry community in the Tochigi Prefecture (Bennett 1951: 1–2). These community studies gathered data used for planning and to integrate translated background material gathered by research staff. Japanese staff helped design effective surveys, questionnaires, and other data-gathering methods and collected attitudinal surveys, interviews, and local archival materials (Bennett 1951: 2).

Bennett’s analysis adopted a “Weber-Parsons scheme of analysis for institutional economics” to account for studying variations in social integration (1951: 3), while other research was more descriptive and less theory oriented. Bennett’s study analyzed how market conditions determined wages and prices, while cultural traditions and intricate systems of obligations, rituals, and values shaped Japanese business relationships. Bennett found that Japanese cultural traditions cultivated “a strong local democratic respect for individual and family rights, [which also led to the] exploitation of workers by ‘bosses,’ who manipulate the traditionalistic structure and demand loyalty in return for protection” (4).

Occasionally, data and analysis from these community studies impacted occupation policy decisions. In one instance, data from Bennett’s fishery rights study were integrated by the Natural Resources Section when it wrote new fisheries laws (Bennett 1951: 4). While some research impacted policy decisions, it is unclear to what extent the social science programs of occupied Japan described by Bennett and others influenced shifts in Japanese cultural policy. Such questions are highlighted by the work of Iwao Ishino, an anthropologist formerly employed by the Japan Occupation’s Public Opinion and Sociological Research Division working alongside Bennett, who published an analysis of the shifts in the traditional Matsui labor supply system in which “labor bosses” controlled hiring in certain Japanese job sectors (dockworkers, carpenters, cooks, etc.). Ishino (1956) argued that traditional economic forces, rather than nuanced understanding of cultural meanings, likely accounted for the collapse of the labor boss system.

Many of these occupation studies sought to understand how traditional Japanese cultural systems of obligation interfered with claimed efficiencies of capitalism-unfettered markets. One of Bennett’s occupation studies, titled “Economic Aspects of a Boss-Henchman System in the Japanese Forestry Industry” (1958), described his attempts to understand how traditional systems using local networks of employment obligations led to inefficiencies and incurred unnecessary costs.
Bennett detailed the importance of customary loyalties and showed how expectations were embedded in traditional logging and wood-processing occupations. Bennett described this “informal social system, with its web-like fabric, extending via kinship, ritual or simulated kinship, and chains of obligations through the whole nation, [which] can be efficiently mobilized for national purposes,” while conceding that to American outsiders this traditional system would appear “incompatible” and irrational (1958: 28). He observed that plans to modernize underdeveloped nations generally sought to discard traditional obligation-bound systems, and he conceded that in many instances, such as those involving heavy industry, such changes were appropriate; but Bennett advocated that small Japanese industries, with unskilled, migrant labor, be allowed to continue using these cumbersome (to outsiders and occupiers) systems of obligation. He argued that “in these contexts, the Japanese economy continues to display familistic and traditionalistic social patterns and is able to blend them with standard commercial and business methods” (28–29). He found that the forest industry’s boss-henchman system met these criteria and that Western models of development needed to be more flexible and to integrate local cultural practices before assuming that conforming to external top-down managerial changes would increase productivity, profits, or efficiency.

The Japanese Village in Transition

In November 1950, GHQ published The Japanese Village in Transition, a monograph based on the research of Arthur F. Raper, Tami Tsuchiyama, Herbert Passin, and David Sills.10 Raper was a consultant for GHQ’s Natural Resources Section, and the other contributors were staff at GHQ’s Public Opinion and Sociological Research Division (Raper et al. 1950). Transition showcased a level of interdisciplinary collaborative research that was rare in the prewar period. This interdisciplinary team approach grew from the experiences of social scientists who worked on similar interdisciplinary projects at OSS, Office of War Information (OWI), ONI, and other agencies. Transition drew on ethnographic research and survey data gathered in thirteen Japanese villages between 1947 and 1948; Raper evaluated agricultural developments, Tsuchiyama summarized social and cultural issues, and a rich collection of photographs and brief descriptions illustrated the layout of villages and farmland, and daily life in postwar rural Japan.

Transition analyzed political participation by women, changes in the form and function of the extended family, marriage, inheritance practices, kinship
solidarity, retirement, child rearing, the financial collapse of shrines, schools, youth associations, the black market, land reclamation programs, and the impact of agricultural cooperatives installed by American occupation forces to undermine the power of the traditional agricultural associations. It evaluated impacts of new democratic institutions and land reformation programs mandated by GHQ to undermine the traditional grip of powerful Japanese families and royalty (Lu 1996: 491).

The monograph’s ethnographic descriptions of land reform and imposed democracy in Yokogoshi illustrated larger trends in occupied Japan, and its narrative highlighted the counterinsurgency goals at the heart of these policies. An account of a village meeting reported the following:

A meeting was held in the village hall assembly room. Looking up at the large portraits of six of the former headmen, the present officials stated that not one of the officers in the village hall at that time could have held office under conditions prevailing when these earlier mayors were in authority. . . . The present mayor owns no land. He had been a clerk in the village office for more than 30 years until he became deputy mayor; in 1947, he was elected mayor. He has long been identified with the farmers’ union. His background is generally similar to that of the majority of the present assemblymen, nearly all of whom are new owner-operators who were tenants a couple of years ago. Under the previous seven mayors, practically all of the assemblymen had been landowners despite the fact that just before the land reform program was launched, 46 percent of all farmers rented 90 percent or more of the land they cultivated, and 72 percent rented half or more of their land. (Raper et al. 1950: 166)

Replacing leaders with new individuals from outside traditional circles of power was a counterinsurgency technique to establish new power relations that broke with the past. Raper and colleagues stressed themes of increased representation and equality, while seldom examining how the democratic installation of occupation-ready local leaders undermined the old cultural order.

American social scientists studied farmers’ complaints, learning about their worries over increased taxes, inflation, a decline in the black market, increased agricultural production quotas, shortages of consumable goods, limited available farmlands, and a lack of adequate technical assistance (Raper et al. 1950: 182–91). Transition contrasted the new democratically controlled agricultural cooperatives with the traditional “feudal” system.

This new imposed counterinsurgent democratic system eroded traditional relationships and obligations in ways that incentivized allegiances to occupiers.
For many farmers, this shift brought opportunities, as Raper and colleagues reported: “The new agricultural cooperatives are generally reported by farmers to be a real improvement over the earlier agricultural associations. Various concrete improvements are mentioned, particularly the fact that the delivery quotas need not be turned in at the new agricultural cooperatives unless the farmer elected to do so. Under the present system, any dealer who has been designated as an official handler can receive quota deliveries, and almost any dealer can be designated as such if enough farmers certify their desire to deliver to him” (1950: 180).

Perhaps the anthropologically riskiest engineered changes in the cultural practices of postwar rural Japan were the postsurrender Civil Code’s revisions of traditional inheritance laws. Article 900 of the Civil Code nullified the traditional system of primogeniture and replaced it with rules stating that a surviving spouse would inherit one-third of the property, and surviving children would inherit two-thirds of the property, to be divided equally among them (see Raper et al. 1950: 211). When Raper’s team asked locals about the impact of these inheritance changes, they found that “the consensus of most of the farmers interviewed was that if the inheritance provision of the revised Civil Code were carried out, the family as an economic unit would encounter great difficulty” (211). The American occupiers who were designing these changes seemed unconcerned about accelerating the forces of devolution of landholdings, focusing instead on how these laws provided greater equity. Young people uniformly favored the traditional inheritance system, arguing that the responsibilities of care for elderly parents required a greater level of inheritance (212).

The occupation’s enforcement of Articles 14 and 24 of the new constitution undermined the traditional “house” system and democratized family arrangements in ways that transformed property relations and intergenerational obligations. Article 24, section II stated, “With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes” (Schmidt 2005: 323n165). After 1952, conservative Japanese politicians tried to restore the traditional “house” system, citing the rapid fragmentation of landholdings in rural communities, but these efforts failed “because of the determined opposition mainly from youth and women’s organizations, but also due to the fact that the conservatives were losing their rural strongholds in the wake of the effects of industrialization and urbanization” (Schmidt 2005: 328). Petra Schmidt noted that from the postwar occupation until the 1960s, several failed attempts were made to allow
a single child to inherit agricultural holdings, with compensation to siblings, and while these efforts failed, other agricultural legislation accomplished these goals (2005: 328–29).

Drawing on fieldwork in the village of Futomi funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Office of Naval Research (ONR), John Bennett later expanded some of the work that had appeared in *Transition* (Bennett and Ishino 1955: 41n1). Bennett and Ishino’s later publications drew on unpublished data collected by occupation forces, later integrating this research into an anthropological narrative examining how Japanese culture coped with the extreme environmental and economic limitations of this “land-hungry village” (42–43).

Bennett and Ishino examined the impact of ecological limitations on the development of specific cultural formations. Describing Futomi as a village limited by “land scarcity,” where economic limitations shaped postwar developments, theirs was an ecological argument in which farmers maximized good soils with high-yield crops, and poor soils were planted with low-yield crops. The local carrying capacities limited population growth (Bennett and Ishino 1955: 43).

Their account of villagers’ cultural adaptation to living in such circumscribed environments relied on mechanical structural functionalist metaphors, presenting the village as having “devised elaborate and sensitive machinery to fight the problems brought about by land scarcity and poverty of natural resources” (Bennett and Ishino 1955: 43). This was an innovative ecological analysis, yet the lack of analysis of the political economy of the occupation stunted their explanations of a world occupied and partially restructured by American force, which was acknowledged but not an active force worthy of analysis itself.

The Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology

Former theaters of war soon became training grounds for a new generation of anthropologists. Postwar occupations provided funding opportunities for graduate students looking for fieldwork research possibilities, increasingly moving American anthropologists to dissertation fieldwork outside of the United States. William Lessa, Thomas Gladwin, and Ward Goodenough were part of a new generation of American anthropologists whose Micronesian fieldwork was sponsored by postwar funding sources like the ONR (through the NRC Council’s Pacific Science Board’s) and CIMA (see table 2.1) (Falgout 1995; Fischer 1979).
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In 1946, CIMA directed a project sponsored by the U.S. Commercial Company Economic Survey, sending twenty-two social scientists to field settings throughout Micronesia to gather economic, political, and social data on post-war conditions (see Oliver 1951). Between 1947 and 1948, CIMA hired forty-two field researchers, twenty-five of whom were cultural anthropologists, to gather primary data on the state of Micronesian society. The approach used by CIMA was modeled after previous projects for the U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology and the Philippines Ethnology Survey — an early episode of applied anthropology described by Roberto González as one in which “colonial administration was reduced to a problem of rational scientific management” (2010: 141;
Kiste and Marshall 2000: 267). The CIMA ethnographic research was primarily funded by the ONR, with supplemental funding from the Wenner-Gren Foundation (Spoehr 1951: 2). In 1949 the NRC’s Pacific Science Board began sponsoring the Scientific Investigations in Micronesia’s ecological studies of island environments and cultural research, including traditional diets and archaeological inventories (Mason 1953). Felix Keesing developed a training program for Micronesian administrators from 1946 to 1949 (Keesing 1947; Mason 1953: 1; NBAAA 1947 1[2]: 15).

Ward Goodenough did fieldwork in the Gilberts on the Onotoa Atoll in 1951 and Bengt Danielsson worked on the Raroia Atoll in 1952 (Mason 1953: 2). As a graduate student at Harvard, David Schneider originally planned on conducting fieldwork in Africa, but after learning of CIMA-funded fieldwork opportunities on Yap, he later wrote, “The jingle of coins attracted my attention” (Schneider and Handler 1995: 85).

The Handbook on the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands drew on the work of CIMA anthropologists, focusing on managerial outcomes that mirrored wartime Pacific handbooks that Murdock and others had produced a few years earlier (OCNO 1948). The Handbook was a neocolonial administrative guide describing local property relations, work habits, land tenure systems, exchange systems, land disputes, settlement patterns, the primacy of kinship, and so on.

The Handbook described managerial strategies of direct and indirect rule, arguing that adopting an indirect approach “-clears the way for normal evolution of the familial local system toward political forms more in keeping with modern world conditions.” Notions of “normal evolution” reinforced neocolonial policies within cultural evolutionary frameworks that helped justify changes in local governmental structures that would help local cultures progress, rather than explanations focusing on American geopolitical interests (OCNO 1948: 124). The Handbook identified problems for indirect rule, including local corruption, nepotistic tendencies, and the abuse of authority, at times referring to local leaders as “kings” and using other terms that drew on historical European notions of social structure. The Handbook advocated for a special “double type of leadership,” such as was installed in the Marshall Islands, or Ponape, where “the paramount chiefs of the districts hold the top official positions, but district secretaries are held mainly responsible for carrying the load of practical affairs. In the Marshalls, too, the kings are given fullest ceremonial honors, but local administrative responsibilities are in the hands of magistrates” (125). It suggested capturing the loyalties of local youth and recommended creating ceremonial roles for traditional chiefs, with an understanding that, with time,
these traditional leaders “will be called upon less for practical leadership” (125). The Handbook supported cima anthropologist Saul Riesenbergs’s suggestion that potential heirs to traditional leadership titles be shipped out for Western schooling in Hawaii and the U.S. mainland (125).

The Handbook warned that external management of native populations could lead to a “growth of political consciousness” and advised administrators to not stir up nativist or nationalist feelings, which can “arise primarily out of the social unrest which comes from disintegration of the old cultures, and from the pressures of alien domination and discrimination” (OCNO 1948: 126). Administrators were cautioned that past uprisings caused foreign administrators to react in ways that strengthened local support, and they were advised to maintain local input on some administrative decisions in order to reduce the possibility of revolts. The Handbook theorized that coming independence efforts would likely be island group–specific, and given the existing linguistic and geographic separation, it was unlikely that separate island groups would develop a sense of “common identity,” so threats to American rule would be localized, not pan-Micronesian (126).

Anthropologists at cima frequently acknowledged the recent war in their narratives, and in some instances vestiges of the war may have been represented as core cultural features of these societies. As Lin Poyer shows, Thomas Gladwin and Seymour Sarason’s work in postwar Truk used psychological inventory tests indicating “food anxiety,” a cultural trait they connected to the near starvation faced by islanders during the war (Poyer 2004: 161–62). Some anthropologists characterized the impacts of the war on Micronesian cultures as devastating. Douglas Oliver concluded that the “conquest of the islands by combat and the defeat of Japan destroyed completely the prewar economic structure,” and that the war destroyed the islanders’ income sources (1951: 32). Oliver described “the presence of [U.S.] armed forces is unduly blocking the economic development of Micronesians” (1951: 11). He recommended that the United States support the restoration of native economies, and that the U.S. military restore some lands taken from natives for U.S. military installations. Oliver advocated developing support programs to supply pigs and chickens for every family.

Alexander Spoehr’s 1951 report for the Naval Civil Administration Unit in the Marianas described the ongoing transfer of administration from the U.S. Navy to the U.S. Department of the Interior. Spoehr argued that anthropological insights into Micronesian customs were needed if Americans were to undertake an “enlightened administration” of the islands (Spoehr 1951: 1). Anthropologists provided instructional materials to the School of Naval Administration,
anthropologist Lieutenant Commander Phillip Drucker oversaw applied programs in Micronesia, and Homer Barnett took up these duties when the administration was transferred from the navy to the Department of the Interior (Spoehr 1951: 2–3).

Research projects at cima provided a broad range of fieldwork opportunities for fledgling and midcareer American anthropologists, fieldwork that was a gateway for the careers of a new generation and led to the production of classic anthropological texts and important theoretical works on kinship and other topics, while simultaneously generating knowledge that was at least conceived of as having managerial uses. With a confluence of naval intelligence needs and anthropological theoretical desires, George Murdock’s work for both cima and the Institute of Human Relations (ihr) made ihr’s project “the largest research effort in the history of American anthropology and a major program in applied anthropology” (Kiste and Marshall 2000: 265). Many cima ethnographic reports read as fractured, hurried works, in part because Murdock provided financial bonuses that encouraged this sort of work, but also because the fractured theoretical approach and functional uses of the work reinforced such approaches. David Schneider recalled Murdock offering “a $500 bonus if you wrote up your report real quickly” (Schneider and Handler 1995: 21).

From Fighting Fascism to Supporting Occupations

Many who took part in transforming the postwar world did so while continuing to use the previous war as an ideological reference point. Most anthropologists working on occupations or aid programs conceived of their role as that of a stabilizer or liberator, not an active agent of a new American empire.11 The Second World War brought a unity of purpose for many Americans, most of whom were impacted by notions of fighting totalitarianism and making the world safe for democracy. The threats of Nazi ideologies championing racial superiority, postwar news of the extent of the horrors of the Holocaust, and Japanese atrocities during Japan’s occupation of the Philippines, China, Burma, and elsewhere in Asia helped some justify American war losses and attacks on civilian populations abroad. These postwar residues helped nurture ideological justifications for a new era’s conceptions of American exceptionalism.

Anthropology has long been ambivalent about how to cope with the political processes in which it is enveloped. This ambivalence is found in the discipline’s contradictory early articulation of the innate equality of all cultures, while simultaneously assisting in the colonial subjugation of those recognized as
theoretically equal. Some contradictions can be reduced to differences in individual anthropologists’ political perspectives, but the collective positions of disciplinary professional associations have been as inconsistent as these individual positions. Anthropologists, like others of their time and place, internalize the political views of their times in ways that generally coalesce the political processes of their society.

The milieu of the Second World War and shadows of anthropologists’ wartime contributions lay draped over the discipline after the war in ways that were not always obvious at the time. American anthropologists’ responses to World War II helped them misinterpret and support their nation’s Cold War international policies in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s. This interpretive lag is a crucial element for understanding how American anthropology came to so easily align its orientation with policy agendas supporting American expansion. The normalcy of anthropology’s military links is seen in the pages of postwar issues of the News Bulletin of the AAA. The front page of the April 1950 issue included two job announcements marking this milieu: one for naval operations field consultants on Yap and Ponape, the second seeking anthropologists for a classified research project at Air University’s Arctic, Desert, and Tropic Information Center (NBAAA 1950 4[2]: 1).

As Bruce Cumings observed, during the early postwar period, “scholars caught up in one historical system and one discourse that defined discipline, department, area, and subject suddenly found themselves in another emerging field of inquiry, well in advance of imagining or discovering the subject themselves. To put a subtle relationship all too crudely, power and money had found their subject first, and shaped fields of inquiry accordingly” (Cumings 1999: 179). This historical shift can be easily discerned with hindsight, but for those living through these transformations, the preexisting lens of interpretation anchored in past practices was most often used to explain political developments. The range of critiques of American policies developing at the time is impressive. It is not that some anthropologists or political writers did not understand the political transformations of the Cold War as they were occurring. Some clearly did, but these were minority views, outside the mainstream consciousness of the time. Most notable among those Americans who understood the transformations of the Cold War to be fundamentally different than America’s political purpose during the Second World War were those of the radical left. Publications like the Nation, the Progressive, and I. F. Stone’s Weekly provided timely analysis that interpreted American postwar foreign policy as serving fundamentally different ends than those advanced in the war years and before.
Henry Wallace’s reasons for rejecting the Marshall Plan highlight the limitations presented by strictly historicist analysis. The presence of Wallace’s sophisticated, marginalized critique of 1947 (or the analysis of Jerome Rauch, discussed in chapter 4) demonstrates how strictly “historicist” positions necessarily champion and hegemonically elevate past voices from a dominant majority, most frequently aligned with power, over those from a marginalized minority. It is difficult to imagine who might have funded such marginal critiques during this period so marked by the rise of McCarthyism.

A range of forces align to support the rise of one research project or interpretive school over another. The coming availability of government and private foundation funds to finance postwar academic research helped transform universities and professional associations, like the American Anthropological Association and the Society for Applied Anthropology, as these and other organizations sought to best align themselves with new funding opportunities — alignments that mutually served the funders and recipients of these funds.