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The Common People Living with Ambivalence after Defeat in War: Americanization in postwar Japan captured by Shōmei Tōmatsu

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Abstract

Shōmei Tōmatsu was one of the most influential Japanese photographers of the post-war era, and his raw and impressionistic style signaled a break from the quiet formalism that had defined earlier works of photography. Moreover, it is noteworthy that his “group-photographs” (*gun-shashin*) is distinguished from the “photo-realism movement” and “photojournalism”, both of which were dominant in the 1950s.

On the other hand, a review of prior research indicates that Tōmatsu had been regarded as a new generation artist who emerged in the 1960s, whose art was characterized by visual images. The symbolism of his work had generally been discussed in a limited manner by focusing, almost solely, on the “group-photographs”. In other words, little was known about how he faced and understood the reality of postwar Japan.

In the previous study, the authors examined how he deepened his understanding of the lives and deaths of atomic bomb victims in Nagasaki over 30 years. We devised and applied a new methodology that enabled us to grasp the true essence of the photographer’s spiraling thoughts and emotions reflected in his practical actions. We found that Tōmatsu gradually observed individuals in their everyday lives, who lived with the memories of the unforgettable atomic bomb. The above finding brings up a question that has remained unanswered: How did he capture the intricacies of social change from the postwar years of recovery to the rapid-growth era, which was strongly characterized by Americanization? Specifically, while previous research has emphasized his critical view of the US, it is necessary to focus on the bitter inner struggle he went through due to his fateful encounters with US military bases as an adolescent teetering on the brink of starvation. It was this struggle that drove him to journey into the archipelago, including Nagasaki, for more than half a century.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe how he expressed the reality of

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Americanization in Japan during the 1950s to 60s from the perspective of the new methodology mentioned above. In particular, it is significant to note that his work from those decades suggests that he was constantly influenced by his traumatic experience of war.

In conclusion, it is clarified that Tōmatsu photographed every human life with empathy in the 1950s, which was still emotionally scarred due to the aftermath of the defeat, while the postwar reconstruction was close to an end. Furthermore, in the 1960s, he kept his watchful eyes over the inseparable bonds between Japan and the US, although he had so far expressed antipathy to the never-ending occupation despite the Japanese independence. Most importantly, in his eyes, the true essence of the occupation was not just accepting an American way of life but also integrating the radical changes of the political and economic system, as represented by democracy, into the reborn nation. However, in the 1970s, he painfully realized that Japan, which had become one of the world's top economic powers, gave short shrift to the lives of the common people. From this, it has followed that he looked straight at the unforgettable death and anguish, set against the postwar affluence, based on his own formative experiences.

Keywords: Shōmei Tōmatsu; Ashes of Defeat; Americanization; Postwar Japan

1. Introduction

Shōmei Tōmatsu (1930-2012) was a photographer who captured postwar Japan for over half a century since the 1950s. He was known as the Japanese “giant of postwar photography.” In the history of Japanese postwar photography, Tōmatsu is part of a new generation of “image-school” (*eizo-ha*) photographers who emphasized photography’s unique visual effects. This school emerged in the 1960s, after breaking from earlier dominant trends of “photo-realism” that had astutely captured the postwar social conditions and the idea of “assembled pictures” (*kumi-shashin*), which focuses on portraying social events as stories. Tōmatsu proposed an original form of expression through his “group-photographs” (*gun-shashin*) and continued to capture the changes in postwar Japanese society. The infamous “Natori-Tōmatsu dispute” in 1960¹⁾ shows how Tōmatsu’s style was a rebellion against the “assembled pictures” (i.e., photojournalism) that had been promoted and led by the editor and photographer Yōnosuke Natori.

We conducted a detailed review of extant research and found that the perspectives from which Shōmei Tōmatsu and his works have been discussed are problematic in two ways. First, some have discussed Tōmatsu as a leading photographer of the “image-school” generation within the general contexts of time, social condition, and history of photography. Second, others have discussed his “group-photographs” but have focused only on the symbolism, that is, the abstract image and meaning, and the reactions the similarities between photographs combined through the pages elicit among readers. This means that, in the literature, Tōmatsu’s innermost thoughts and emotions, which deepened in the course of his photographic career, have been discussed independently of his works. Thus, little is known about how Tōmatsu understood the reality of the postwar Japanese society that he observed. In our previous paper (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021), we addressed the above-mentioned shortcomings in the literature. We examined the reality of atomic-bomb victims in Nagasaki that Tōmatsu followed for over 30 years since the early 1960s. We applied our original methodology of “photography in practice” (*shashin jissen*) and analyzed diverse materials, including Tōmatsu’s photobooks, magazine and newspaper articles, and interviews published at the time. By “photography in practice,” we mean a methodology that comprehensively grasps a photographer’s thoughts and emotions, which deepen over time in the course of their photographic activities and encounters. To date, we have applied “photography in practice” to relate the activities and the sociohistorical context in which Michio Hoshino lived; a photographer who, like Tōmatsu, watched the lives of common people in postwar times and traveled through Alaska. With this, we were able to schematize the core of Hoshino’s philosophy, which is “the relationship between humans and nature” (Yoshinari 2021).

In the aforementioned study of Tōmatsu’s work in Nagasaki (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021), the most important point was that Tōmatsu continued to express the never-ending damage

of the atomic bomb through three workpieces that were released over time by grouping and re-grouping the pictures differently each time. This implies that the trajectory of Tōmatsu—returning to Nagasaki multiple times and gradually recapturing the damage caused by the atomic bomb—has its own meaning. Thus, we conclude that Tōmatsu, who was not an atomic bomb victim (*hibakusha*), struggled with the “distance” between himself and the experience of Nagasaki during his first visit, but as he went on to photograph the site for over 30 years, he gradually connected with each individual *hibakusha* and eventually redefined them as people whose everyday lives had been intertwined with life in and after war, just as it had for Tōmatsu. We found that the contradicting convoluted thoughts and emotions—dealt with by each individual including Tōmatsu, during the war and period of occupation by US forces—were the source of Tōmatsu’s expression of everyday life in the postwar era. We note that for Tōmatsu, who was 15 years of age when the war ended with a Japanese defeat, this was the “shadow of war” stained with “war time suffering, memory of defeat, and postwar starvation,” which defined his postwar life; in other words, it was the “primal scene” (Tōmatsu 1987: 142).

These findings show that a comprehensive examination of Tōmatsu’s photographic activities through the “photography in practice” methodology must pay close attention to the point that, for Tōmatsu, “occupation” and “Americanization” after the defeat, which are indivisible and intertwined with his own “primal scene,” marked postwar Japan the most. Tōmatsu’s intense encounter with the US through the barbed wire of American bases in post-defeat Japan led to the production of the “Japanese” series, a collection that portrayed “Japanese born in the Meiji-era,” starting in the late 1950s. Around 1960, he began working on the “occupation” series, where he gazed at the American bases that remained on Japanese soil even after occupation ended. These two series reached a “point of convergence” in Tōmatsu’s photographs of Okinawa, which he pursued as his lifework alongside Nagasaki, after he was deeply moved by the turbulence in Okinawa amid negotiations of its reversion to Japan in the late 1960s (Tōmatsu 1976: 236-237). Thus, one of the most important subjects for Tōmatsu was “Americanization” after Japan’s defeat, which continued to make him feel conflicted. This intense encounter with the US propelled Tōmatsu to continue to capture postwar Japan from different locations of the archipelago for several decades.

However, as we shall see in Section 2, studies have discussed Tōmatsu’s work on the lives of common people right after Japan’s defeat and on the condition of *de facto* US occupation that persisted even after Japanese sovereignty was restored in a limited manner by focusing solely on their satirical and critical side. Studies have shown how Tōmatsu expressed, while objecting to, such “Americanization,” which repainted postwar Japan violently. Nevertheless, in view of the complex experience of defeat as mentioned above, it is necessary to pay close attention to how Tōmatsu explored the future of US occupation by approaching the subject from the “interface,” that is, its boundaries, without affirming or negating the condition. As we shall in Section 3, it is impossible to overlook that there was an ideological effort on part of

Tōmatsu to understand and re-examine how the US was also changing, as witnessed through quotidian life and as he stood from the perspective of an ordinary individual living in the postwar times, and continuously reflecting on the experiences of war and end of war. Thus, we refer to Tōmatsu's encounter with the US as a "primal scene," and examine the reality of "Americanization" that he experienced in the period between the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. It is also evident how, in 1970, Tōmatsu was concerned about the fading postwar resolution, whereas the country became a global economic power amid several contradictions, such as reliance on American military protection (under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the US) and various social and public health problems caused by pollution (*kōgai*).

2. Literature on Tōmatsu's view on postwar "Americanization"

We start by reviewing studies that have focused on Tōmatsu's "Japanese" and "occupation" series. The series that captured individuals by a young Tōmatsu in his twenties at a time of transition from defeat to postwar recovery has been discussed with an emphasis on the "satire" directed at ordinary people living in postwar Japan. For instance, Tetsuo Kishi mentioned Tōmatsu as a photographer of the "image-school" that emerged around the 1960 Anpo protest (*Anpo tōsō*) against the Japan-US Security Treaty to explain how the field of photography was also in a state of tension in response to the historical rise in political consciousness among the Japanese population (Kishi 1974: 26). Kishi argued that in his project, Tōmatsu had satirically captured a mixture of emotions of the well-behaved *petite bourgeoisie* that are tossed about at the mercy of a distorted postwar society that is "feudalistic" and "pre-modern" (ibid: 35-36). From the moment he emerged as a young and talented photographer, Tōmatsu had been credited for documenting the "pre-modern image of people" and "feudalistic social phenomena" by contrasting these with the image of "liberation" from the pre-war legacies of feudalism brought about by democratization and modernization (Watanabe 1959; etc.).²⁾

As we argued in a previous paper (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021), it is also important to remember that Tōmatsu combined the experiential sensibility of being an actual survivor of postwar turmoil and his perspective as a critic of postwar society (Iizawa 2008: 86-87). Kōtarō Iizawa explained that Tōmatsu's "Japanese" series broke away from the simplicity of "photo-realism" that was the mainstream up to that point. Tōmatsu removed the "superficial mask of the 'common people'" and exposed their "vulgarity" through his original approach of "group-photographs." Here, Tōmatsu's interest was directed toward the "power structure" behind the reality present in front of his eyes (ibid: 87).³⁾ This critical view of postwar society was also pointed out in discussions on Tōmatsu's subsequent "occupation" series (Kishi 1974; Iizawa 1999). For example, Iizawa expounded that Tōmatsu's critical gaze directed at the "*petite bourgeoisie*" living in the postwar society became even more radicalized in his

“occupation” series as a result of being combined with the symbolism of his visual expression (Iizawa 1999: 84). However, the fact that Tōmatsu captured the American military base and surrounding towns as a location where contradictions of postwar “Americanization” erupted while struggling internally with this reality shows that his work was not a mere one-sided “critique.”

Scholars and photographers in the US and Australia have paid attention to this point on Tōmatsu’s take on “Americanization” (Dower 2004; Rubinfiel 2004; Tunney 2013; Yeoh 2013).⁴⁾ These authors have described Tōmatsu’s expression, rooted in the complex contradiction he felt after Japan’s defeat, from multiple angles, examining each of his photobooks and other materials such as magazine articles published at the time; this differs from how the matter is discussed in terms of the history of Japanese photography. Whereas Tōmatsu’s love-hate feelings toward American occupation are taken into consideration, his work tends to be considered a criticism of the growing influence of American military bases and violation of long-held Japanese purity, which is considered to have been symbolized in the arrival of Black soldiers in Japan and images of “mixed-blood children,” for instance (Dower 2004: 73-74). The image of a Black soldier was interpreted as a symbol of the violence brought about by the American bases against Japanese people (Dower 2004: 67; Tunney 2013: 7).⁵⁾ This series of interpretations emanate from John Dower (1999) who described the closely entangled postwar relationship between Japan and the US through the metaphor of the “masculine,” where the US, the occupier, “embraces” the “feminine” Japan, the occupied.

This way, two problems arise from the review of the literature on the “Japanese” and “occupation” series that Tōmatsu produced in the 1950s and 1960s. One is the emphasis placed on the satire and criticism directed at the “backward” lives of people in postwar Japan amid efforts toward democratization and modernization. This came at the cost of overlooking the significance of Tōmatsu’s experience as a survivor of Japan’s defeat, which is the lens through which he continued to capture the life of each person. As an example of a line of discussion that sheds light on this, Kōji Taki mentioned how Tōmatsu gazed at each individual who was arduously striving to live in the postwar era within the “structural duality of the modern and pre-modern” (Taki 2003: 231, 247). Referring to the book *Japan (Nippon)* (1967)—one of Tōmatsu’s works that is central to the analysis in this paper—Nobuya Yoshimura, who like Tōmatsu, also experienced Japan’s defeat in war, praised his work as the very first of its kind to subjectively describe the feelings of “failure,” “emptiness,” and “starvation” that people experienced with the defeat and occupation (Yoshimura 1970: 210). This is critical as it illuminates the importance of Tōmatsu’s gaze at each human being rather than his empathy for those with a shared experience. However, even in these discussions, a comprehensive understanding of how Tōmatsu continued to examine the quotidian activities of individuals living during a time of rapid social change from defeat in war to highspeed economic growth remains absent. The other is the predetermined manner in which “Americanization” is

discussed based on analyses of singular pictures with little consideration for the rapid social change that was taking place when the projects began in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, as we shall see in Section 4, Jo Takeba decoded Tōmatsu's picture "My town" (1952) in light of the social conditions at the time and explained that it captured the contradiction encompassed in his hometown, Nagoya, where voices against the rearmament of Japan were heard while the economy boomed with income from the Korean War special procurement (Takeba 2013). However, the discussion focused on how Tōmatsu's work differed from expression methods such as "photo-realism" and "assembled pictures" that were mainstream until then. How Tōmatsu perceived the transformation of the US remains unclarified. The second problem is that, in the literature, the US as reflected in Tōmatsu's lens was positioned as the subject of his criticism: that is, a presence that invaded Japan after war, bolstered by its powerful military power, which is what its military bases symbolize. Overlaying this with the first problem mentioned above, it is clear that it is necessary to diachronically examine how Tōmatsu saw people's acceptance of the American presence in their daily lives while he dealt with complex inner struggles. In the next section, we present an overview of the reality of the "postwar resolution" embraced by each person at the start of their postwar lives, including Tōmatsu, and of the acceptance of the US as an "occupier," through people's everyday lives.

3. The thoughts of "weak individuals" as quotidian people continuing to face defeat and occupation

3-1. Defeat as a formative experience of postwar life and foregrounding daily life

In our previous paper (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021) we explained a couple of important points on the "experience of air raids and destruction." First, it spurred in each survivor of the wartime and occupation periods, including Tōmatsu, ambivalent and complicated thoughts and emotions. Second, it urged people to reflect on the idealistic thinking of the pre-war stage and realize the importance of thinking that is grounded in specific and concrete "places of action." In this sub-section, we draw a concrete image of the postwar "Americanization" of Japan that Tōmatsu saw by establishing that "common people"⁶⁾ continued to conduct their lives based on their individual experiences of defeat in war. This is because for "common people," postwar consciousness entails "the act of questioning the wartime consciousness and throwing it back into one's present life" (Kurihara 2005: 167). In the next section, this must be borne in mind while examining the significance of Tōmatsu's trajectory of facing postwar society as an ordinary person living in a postwar world and with empathy for others while gazing at his own "shadow of war."

Defeat in war became a turning point that marked a spike in interest in life, including people's daily lives, which had been placed in the "shade" until then. This heightened interest is apparent in publications like the journal *Science of Thought* (*Shisō no Kagaku*)

by the Science of Thought Research Association and magazine *Notebook on Everyday Life* (*Kurashi no Techō*) by Yasuji Hanamori (Kano 2002:151). While examining the post-defeat “restoration of the philosophy of daily life,” the image of common people that the early era *Science of Thought* tried to capture is important because the focus was precisely on the agency that manifested in the quotidian activities of each individual, who were no experts in philosophizing but were agents facing the unparalleled historical experience of war and defeat “eye-to-eye and at the fundamental level.” For example, Masako Amano pointed out the importance of the fact that the vitality as agents of social change was found in the wisdom of those “common people who had endured the harsh and painful lives of the wartime and postwar period,” who until then had been deemed as “a mass deprived of consciousness” compared to intellectuals (Amano 1992: 108,110). This is the power of the “philosophy emanating from the necessities of survival” (ibid.: 110). However, this “Common Man's Philosophy” was “expressed as concrete action and constantly changing” in the course of each person’s daily life. It was ambiguous and “buried in subtle emotions” (Amano 1996: 80). This way, the image of the common people that *Science of Thought* tried to register in the post-defeat years revealed its cunning two-sided nature of superficial obedience and inner resistance that was needed for survival. Simultaneously, it also registered the image of “weak individuals” who sometimes uncritically accept what they see (ibid.: 230, 232). The most important counterpoint to the idealized “masculinity” of pre-war times is the “cowardice” of the individual, which was precisely the back-to-basics “postwar resolution” (Sakurai 2007: 111). The possibility of nonconformity to war has been entrusted to this “weak individual” that is burdened by ambiguity and is destined to search for what one can do about the current condition. It has not been entrusted to the “ascetic and strong individual” who single-handedly rebels against the unjust war waged by the nation-state (Tsurumi 2005: 18-19). The foundations of postwar Japan were sourced in this “anti-war” resolution rooted in each person’s quotidian nature.

Postwar Japan shifted toward an emphasis on the economy. As the 1956 *White Paper on the Economy* (*Keizai Hakusho*) stated, the era was “no longer postwar.” That year, real per capita income recovered to the highest level in pre-war times. As Masanao Kano pointed out, the “postwar” period began with parting ways with “tyranny,” “war,” and “poverty” that marked the “pre-war” era and aimed at the opposing end of these: “democracy,” “peace,” and “affluence.” However, from the 1960s to the 1970s, the “postwar” consciousness that existed in a state of tension against the “pre-war” gradually faded among the people (Kano 2008:58-59, 64). This disappearance took place through overlaps with another “postwar” consciousness that eventually became foregrounded (ibid.: 43). Unlike before the war, a new consciousness viewed the state in a relativistic manner while “self-affirming” the rationalistic postwar national system that prioritized economic growth, based on both people’s satisfaction with “prosperity” brought about by high economic growth and a sense of pride as the bearers

of such prosperity (ibid.: 49-50, 54).

However, we must not forget that the lineage of such an image of the common people premised on “the weakness, ambiguity, vulnerability, and fragility of human beings” continued to breathe without ceasing even throughout the economic growth and ultimate rebirth of the nation. The best example of this is the anti-Vietnam War movement “*Beheiren*” (The Citizen’s League for Peace in Vietnam!) that was active in the late 1960s and 1970s, led by Makoto Oda and Shunsuke Tsurumi (Amano 1996: 184). As we shall see in the next section, Tōmatsu, who experienced defeat in the war and lived in the same period, constantly questioned the “postwar resolution” throughout his life and continued to photograph postwar Japan.

3-2. People’s ambivalence toward the US during occupation and after restoration of sovereignty

In the previous section, we outlined the common people of the postwar as “weak individuals” facing a historical experience of “defeat in war.” Bearing this in mind, this subsection examines how “Americanness” was accepted in people’s livelihoods in the period after the defeat. For example, Shunsuke Tsurumi cited the following three aspects of the influence of the occupying forces on post-defeat Japan: Food, lifestyle with respect to heterosexual relationships, and justice (Tsurumi 2001: 23). Here we start by summarizing the second and third points. We return to the first point later. For the second point, for example, dating customs that had been seen only in Western-style paintings before the war—like the image of a man and woman walking shoulder to shoulder in the street—began to appear as everyday scenes after the occupation. This overlapped with the “primal scene” that Tōmatsu, who had spent his youth in the midst of ruins, witnessed with intensity.

As for the “sense of justice,” people were more than lightly skeptical about accepting the “new standard of value” as set forth by the occupying forces as a universal one that should be accepted equally by all. For example, the Tokyo Trials tried the leaders of the Empire of Japan for their responsibility in the war under the newly created concept of “war crimes” while the Emperor was left out. Thus, only a handful of wartime leaders were executed; this spurred distrust among people against the Japanese and American governments and others (ibid.: 56-57).

Memories of the occupying forces as the “supplier” amid food shortages at its extreme—which eased the pangs of hunger—were unforgettable (ibid.: 20). For example, Tsuneo Yasuda argued that a certain tension was vested in the “common people’s everyday life sentiment” against the successful US food aid and DDT. This involved “ambivalence between the sorrow of defeat and the deliciousness of the sausage sandwich” and “gratitude for the improvement of hygiene with a certain sense of discomfort” (Yasuda 2005: 268). This ambivalence toward the actions of the occupying forces converged into gratitude to the US and became an important step toward accepting “Americanness” (ibid.: 268). As we wrote in

our previous paper (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021), we re-emphasize how Tōmatsu's sentiment of "starvation" led to his photography. Immediately after the defeat, Tōmatsu was on the other side of the fence, which was the only thing separating the American base and the "starvation hell." This experience was repeatedly mentioned in later years. In the course of their daily lives, each person encountered the US, the "occupier," in their own way, harboring a certain sense of chasm and ambiguity, such as in feelings of fear, skepticism, astonishment, envy, and gratitude. In the late 1950s and 1960s, when postwar Japan took a so-called reverse course, the US military bases on the mainland were reduced to major facilities, and the "culture of the bases" were contained within woven wires. Thus, the occupation regime that had been maintained until then became much less visible (Yoshimi 2007: 150). We shall bear the following two changes in mind: First, in the process, the figure of the US began to split; that is between the US as an everyday landscape directly experienced through the presence of the bases and violence, and its "image of affluence consumed through the media;" Second, the twisted way in which postwar Japan accepted this two-faced US. In other words, as the occupation ended, postwar Japan began to try to forget its previous ties to the "occupiers." Instead, its "consumerist desire for the US" grew. This way, the image of the US as a symbol of affluence, detached from the memory of the military violence of the past, appeared before the people (ibid.: 125).

In parallel, Americanization in the dimension of people's lives gradually began to progress in the latter half of the 1950s. In the 1960s, it progressed at an accelerated pace. According to Yasuda, a wave of Americanization as "modernization" centered on the transformation of the home environment with electronic appliances swept in as the period of high economic growth began. At the same time, "*Coca-colonization*" progressed with the liberalization of trade in 1961 (Yasuda 2005: 267). In this context, the shift from the acceptance of Americanness and concomitant "chasm" of the occupation period, as described above, to that of "a sense of existing in the same period of time" deserves the most attention. "The image of the American Empire that is in charge of strategy in East Asia" was that which emerged clearly in daily life since the ratification of the peace treaty. Thus, a climate of "anti-American" and "restoration" symbolized by the base struggle against the expansion of US military bases spread to people's customs and lifestyles (ibid.: 283). At this time, Americanization, which had been received during the occupation period with "envy and astonishment backed by a sense of inferiority," began to be reinterpreted in line with a "sense of contemporaneity," which Makoto Oda explained as "thinking about the US is comparable to thinking about Japan," especially among the younger generation (ibid.: 283-284). This was to look at the US that exists within Japan—a US that was inextricably linked with Japan that permeated each person instead of being a target of criticism (Kato 1991: 355-356). This way, under the circumstances of the continued occupation even after the restoration of sovereignty, the image of the US taken into people's daily lives, gradually underwent a transformation.

3-3. *The encounter with the US as the “primal scene”*

We define Tōmatsu’s intense encounter with the US as a “primal scene” experience. This is implied in the image of common people as “weak individuals” living in the postwar era while questioning the experience of defeat in war, which I have summarized above, and the gradual acceptance of the US through people’s daily lives. We explained in our previous paper about the baffling and complicated feelings that Tōmatsu held during and after the war, and during occupation (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021). That is the pronounced raw sense of living between life and death he experienced while witnessing the glittering formation of B-29s dropping bombs. That is also the “grudge and fury” of those who died like futile “worms” that struck him amid the ruins left behind by the destruction of the bombs. Tōmatsu also held a sense of distrust toward adults who had changed their attitude without scruples once Japan lost the war; the same adults who had been strictly preaching militaristic value norms until then. Tōmatsu witnessed the occupying forces, which were supposed to be considered “demon beasts of America and Britain” during wartime, “liberating” himself and others from starvation in the wake of defeat. Faced with many layers of conflict rooted in these experiences of defeat in the war, Tōmatsu began to examine the fate of postwar society through the act of photographing from a specific “site.” However, in consideration of these “shadows of war,” we would like to bear in mind that Tōmatsu’s experience was layered within himself through his daily encounters with the occupying American soldiers. For example, in later years, Tōmatsu recalled that he struggled between the cruelty of American soldiers described in the accounts he heard about sexual assaults that took place in his neighborhood after the occupation and human kindness of the soldiers he actually met, who patted children’s heads and gave them chewing gum and chocolates (Tōmatsu 1982: 171). Tōmatsu sensed that even within the occupying forces that suddenly appeared under the banner of freedom and equality of democracy, there was a resolute structure of discrimination between whites and blacks. In the aforementioned publication *Japan*, Tōmatsu recalled thus:

However, the recreation area of the American soldiers around the base is divided into “white town” and “black town” and it taught us that strict class and racial discrimination exist in a free and equal US. This cast doubt on nominal democracy, but did not compromise on the reputation of MacArthur’s peaceful occupation policy. (Tōmatsu 1967)

This is why Tōmatsu felt “sympathy” for black soldiers who were at the receiving end of discrimination (Tōmatsu 1984a: 102). He recalled that they were friendly and generous to children like himself at the time, and that there was empathy for people suffering discrimination, which in this case, were the people of a defeated country (Tōmatsu 1984b:

66). Embracing such an overwhelming “primal scene,” Tōmatsu registered the condition of occupation that was set to continue even after the restoration of sovereignty. This was an intense experience that even Tōmatsu constantly questioned as someone living the postwar himself. In his words: “No matter what I do, my first reaction is to revert there” (Tōmatsu 1984a: 103).

4. The transformation of the US within: From the analysis of the “Japan” and “Occupation” series

4-1. Works included in the analysis and methodology

We first go over the materials included in the analysis and the methods applied to clarify the reality of the activities of common people living post-defeat, which Tōmatsu saw as a quotidian survivor, and the “Americanization” that permeated these everyday life activities. As mentioned in Section 1, the foundations for the line of work that led to Okinawa from the 1970s onwards was the “Japanese people” series, which depicted Japanese people born in the Meiji period, and the concomitant “Occupation” series, which captured US military bases and surrounding towns. In this section, we conduct a multifaceted analysis using a collection of Tōmatsu’s works, comprising works he submitted for publication in magazines from the first half of the 1950s when he was a student at university, from the latter half of the 1950s when he became a professional photographer, and later works from the end of the 1960s that were mainly published in magazines, and newspaper articles of the same period. During this period, Tōmatsu produced five photo books, of which *Japan (Nippon)* (1967) contained works from the two series mentioned above. Thus, in this paper, the photobook *Japan* is also part of our analysis material.

With this in mind, we provide an overview of Tōmatsu’s original form of presentation, “group-photographs” and the specifics of its composition method. As detailed in our earlier paper (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021), Tōmatsu proposed “group-photographs” as a method of expression that differed from the conventional and mainstream “photo-realism” that unequivocally captured the reality in front of the lens, and “assembled pictures” that constructed a story by editing photographs into a sequence. Its characteristics can be summarized in the following three points. First, “group-photographs” was a method of expressing the complex reality of postwar society that Tōmatsu faced on the ground. Second, it embossed the multifaceted nature of the reality in front of him by constructing sub-theme “blocks” comprising pictures and texts. Third, it depicted, in a multi-layered manner, what he felt in the scene by taking new pictures of a subject and incorporating them into the next work; just as it was the case with the works Tōmatsu produced over time around the damage caused by the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Based on the characteristics of these “group-photographs,”

we depict the “Americanization” reflected in Tōmatsu’s eyes.

4-2. *The contradictions embodied in people’s lives in postwar society*

In light of the previous section, we reiterate that the “postwar” period in which Tōmatsu lived began with the fresh resolution of “democracy,” “peace,” and “affluence.” However, as we will see below, what emerges from Tōmatsu’s early works is that at the same time, “postwar” embodied numerous contradictions within it.

As has been pointed out in the literature, while still a university student, Tōmatsu was inspired by his teacher’s suggestion to turn his attention to the churning society and began to document, with his camera, the “dynamism” of the “period when the country of Japan was trying to rise up from scratch after total destruction” after being defeated in war (Tōmatsu and Ōshima 2008: 192). As a mark of Tōmatsu’s beginnings, a picture that we would like to bring attention to is “Time-era” (*Jidai; Camera*, May 1952) as a piece that focuses on the scars that society still harbored after the defeat of the war through the image of a grandmother, mother, and child, taken from behind, the three of them standing side by side next to the bridge beam and looking at the river surface. Here, Tōmatsu sensed the passage of time in the sight of three generations of parents and children side by side, and thought of “these parents, who do not seem to be very well-off” and about their “emotions while going out into the cold downtown of December.” Tōmatsu took this photo while feeling a sense of “attachment” to those people who “one feels closest to in everyday life” (Tōmatsu 1952a). He focused on “common people” while combining his feelings about life after the defeat. This way, among the works capturing the severity of life after war, there are those he published right after becoming an independent freelance photographer such as “High school students seeking a part-time job” (1956), “Barge people” (1956), which portrayed the lives of people living on the water on barges, the “Stone cutter” (1957), which featured those who had to support a family through a low-paying heavy-labor job, and so on.

By the time Tōmatsu began to work in earnest as a photographer, the shift to an era in which the postwar period was “paid-off” had already begun. However, while Tōmatsu was struggling with the hardships of life after defeat, he also captured on camera the pre-war state of life preserved without cessation on the islands and villages. These works include “Fragments of an isolated island: the people and resources of Kamishima” (*Camera Mainichi*, September 1957) and “The Christians of Amakusa” (*Sankei Camera*, February 1958). In the former, Tōmatsu focused on the “wisdom of everyday life” alive in the livelihoods of people living in Kamishima, Mie Prefecture. In the latter, the focus is the faith that continued to be deeply rooted in the daily lives of people in Amakusa and Sakizu despite experiencing a history of Christian oppression. However, the way of life Tōmatsu encountered in the sites he visited to photograph was also reminiscent of people’s relationship with the army in pre-war times. In the image “The second and third sons of a farming village” (*Camera Mainichi*, October

1956), he captured two boys running against the background of a thatched-roof house and the smile of a “cheerful and nice” young member of the Japan Self-Defense Forces looking at them from behind. Tōmatsu documented the scene in front of his eyes, the situation in which families of farmers enlisted their second and third sons in the Self-Defense Forces to make ends meet, while overlapping the pre-war relationship between the “Japanese military” and “farming villages.”

The relationship between the former Japan military and farming villages is being reshaped and repeated. When we look straight at the reality of the farming villages, we understand that they have to knock on the doors of the Self-Defense Forces even though they love the peaceful and simple life in the farming villages. But I hope to see the radiant look on their faces when they return to their farming villages. (Tōmatsu 1956c: 27)

Tōmatsu detected the postwar lives of the people in the unbroken connection from the pre-war era. About 10 years had passed since the end of the war, and he was looking at the “shadows” that the previous war still continued to impose over people’s lives.

The “Japanese” series was created to further the line of works that register the lives of postwar people. This collection focuses on the daily lives of politicians and government officials, as represented by images such as “Local politicians” (*Chūō Kōron*, September 1957) and “Section chiefs” (*Chūō Kōron*, July 1958). These images show the human relations around each person that struggles between the policies provided from “above,” as in the national and local governments, and the circumstances on ground. The collection “The principal caught in the middle” (*Sekai*, July 1958) is a case in point. Against the backdrop of the performance evaluation of teachers that escalated to political movement against it in 1958, the images capture the daily life of a principal who struggled between his appreciation of the “postwar educational approach” and the fact that he must uniformly rate teachers regardless of the number of years of service. The collection “Village notables” (*Nippon*, December 1958), published in the same year, recorded the influential people in the villages situated at the foot of Mount Fuji. There, people had been surviving through the postwar years by means of the government compensation for accommodating the former Japanese Army’s training grounds, which was seized by the US military. The images show people’s relief at the release of the seizure while revealing their anxiety about the future of their livelihoods. Accompanying a picture showing the elders of the villages discussing among each other, who gathered at the occasion of a Buddhist sermon to honor the war dead, Tōmatsu noted:

“I miss the old days. All the villagers were pure and peaceful. The occupation forces ruined this completely... Thanks to the base, however, we can manage to eat. It is trouble if they stay, and it is trouble if they leave” this is the only conversation topic even at the

memorial service for those who died in war. (Tōmatsu 1958e)

The rapid changes in society after the defeat led to tensions. The tension each person experienced was integrated as life moved on through war and onward. As seen from the struggle of the notables mentioned above, the most significant event was the “occupation.” When Tōmatsu was a university student and at the starting point of his career in photography, he was already clearly aware of the changes brought about by the occupation, which he witnessed in the streets of his hometown of Nagoya as it changed over time from defeat to occupation. In “My town” (*Camera*, November 1952), Tōmatsu wrote the following, along with three photographs; one is of a “mixed-race child” sitting on the side of the road, another is of a woman who appears to be a prostitute among the workers leaving the ticket gate of the station, and the third is of posters with the words “No to Rearmament” and “Do not build weapons” written on them.

The town I live in, Moriyama, was once garrisoned by the former Imperial Army, and the gateway to the town, the Moriyama train station, was crowded with workers in the war manufacturing facilities. After the defeat, foreign troops moved in, and migrant women who relied on soldiers for money settled in the town. Seven years passed, and in the corners of the town I began to see small bodies of mixed foreign blood. A world that is indifferent to the international-children growing up announces the dangers of a new war. Here and there around town, anti-war posters peel off but are put up again and again. (Tōmatsu 1952b)

As the quote shows, the presence of “women who rely on soldiers” and “international-children growing up” wove Tōmatsu’s own “primal scene,” as explained in the previous section together. The double-layer captured by these images projected another issue: the possibility of the next war that could occur immediately after the end of one war like the Korean War. This way, Tōmatsu recorded the portrait of each person who had no choice but to face the conflicts in the shadows of postwar reconstruction and carry on with life while caught in the middle of tensions happening on the ground. Tōmatsu did so while overlapping his own sense of life he experienced after the defeat in war. This was also the image of “the people” who faced the “necessities of life” in a rapidly changing society and tried to live the daily life that never ceases.

4-3. The “Americanization” permeating from the bases into everyday life

Tōmatsu began to publish an array of works on American military bases and surrounding towns as part of the “Occupation” series from around 1960. Then, the US reflected in Tōmatsu’s camera invaded into the livelihoods of “the people” from the outside. This is

important in understanding the continuity from his earlier works that focused on the people in the aftermath of defeat in war, which we described in the previous subsection. For example, in “Sumie-chan, a mixed-race child” (*Geijutsu Shincho*, February 1959), Tōmatsu reflected on his projects up to that point, and explained that the focus was on the “blood” flowing inside ourselves and concomitantly on “something like the core of humans, Japanese people,” which, for instance, stubbornly lingers even among the young people that dress themselves in American style looks.

The theme “Occupation” is another bud that had nested deep inside of me at the opposite pole of “Japanese.” It is a theme that I place in parallel to “Japanese” rather than at its extension. The new problems that emerge within the contours of “occupation.” The source that regulates the everyday life and culture at the peripheries. These are what I would like to continue watching over carefully just like in the “Japanese” series. (Tōmatsu 1959a: 189)

The image of the US, the unfamiliar other, penetrating into everyday life is also found, for instance, in “Base <Yokosuka>” (*Asahi Camera* 1959 April). Using a set of seven photographs, he expressed the atmosphere of the town around the Yokosuka Air Base. On the first page, Tōmatsu wrote: “Culture came from the other side of the ocean on a mushroom cloud. People call it <shinchū (occupier)>,” and presented the scene of a downtown street lined with rusty tin buildings with signs written in English and sailors visiting souvenir shops run by Japanese people. On the second page, Tōmatsu wrote: “Dear twisted little Japanese town, your bare skin used to be immaculate. Why would you <paint over> it in a hurry? Who said you need to flirt with an uninvited guest from the other side of the ocean, like a clown?” Along with the text, two pictures were juxtaposed side by side: one showing a bright red entrance to a bar in the back alley with the sign “Socialite Wanted” and the other showing the glass doors of a traditional Japanese house displaying a flying kite. Finally, on the third page, the caption stated, “<The symbol of Japan> for sale” alongside a photograph of the rising sun flag for sale in the storefront of a souvenir shop. Next to this photo, Tōmatsu added the text “Thirteen years later, the twisted little <Japan> gradually became fascinated by the lavish behavior of the uninvited guests” and concluded with a picture of an American soldier and his bride walking along the side of the street accompanied by a petite Japanese woman in *geta* wooden clogs (Tōmatsu 1959b).

The content in the work in hand can be divided into three stages based on its developmental trajectory. First, there is a presence of the occupying forces symbolized by the sailors walking around the base. Second, the town is “painted over” to match the base while preserving old-fashioned Japanese houses. Third, there are Japanese people who abandon the “symbol of Japan” of preceding times and steadily accept the US as an object of affluence and admiration. The occupation that began in Japan in the wake of defeat appeared as a

“twisted” event in Tōmatsu’s eyes. It captivated people with its “lavish behavior” but was backed by its overwhelming military power, represented at its extreme by the atomic bomb. Tōmatsu continued to make “occupation” his theme and released several works in 1960, one after another: “HARLEM (Black Town)” (*Asahi Camera* 1960 January), “*Shisen*” (Gaze; *Asahi Camera* 1960 February), “*Shūhen no kodomotachi*” (Children in the vicinity; *Asahi Camera* 1960 March), and “IWAKUNI Iwakuni IWAKUNI” (*Chūō Kōron* 1960 April). They photographed, in the order of release, the US military bases in Yokosuka, Chitose, Misawa, and Iwakuni. On the first page of each work, along with the titles and photographs, there was a sentence that read, “The strange reality suddenly given to me, which I call <occupation>.” The three works published in *Asahi Camera* include text on the upper right corner, which read “US Bases in Japan Series.” This shows that “occupation” carried the meaning of the “primal scene” that Tōmatsu witnessed in the wake of defeat, and transpierced the theme of the entire body of work. It is clear how he tried to capture “occupation” through the US military bases that remained even after Japanese sovereignty was restored.

The phrase “IWAKUNI Iwakuni IWAKUNI” strongly implies the image of towns around the base being painted over by the US, as we saw in the aforementioned “*Kichi* (Base) < Yokosuka >.” This work comprised four themes. The first was “*Ofu-rimitsu*” (Off limits), which depicted US soldiers on guard duty walking around the barbed wire surrounding the base. The second was “*Kichi no Americajin*” (Americans of the base), which depicts US soldiers walking through the streets of the surrounding towns. The third is “*Kichi no Nihonjin*” (Japanese people on the base), which depicts disabled veterans, local children, and residents. The final theme is “*Konketsuji*” (Mixed-race children). The sequence of Tōmatsu’s “group-photographs” unfold as if his gaze was moving from the center of the base to its peripheries, that is, from the US to Japan, and eventually to that which exists on the edges of both. It is clear that Tōmatsu was conscious of the fact that the base was a “strange reality” that appeared suddenly in front of people after the defeat, and of Japan’s condition of subservience to the US.

However, the image of Japan when it faced the 1960 Anpo protest against the Japan-US Security Treaty sits in contrast to this passive attitude toward the US as the occupier. Tōmatsu voiced his protests as a person living under occupation, as we quote below, in the group-photographs titled “*Ikari no hi—6.4 demo*” (The day of wrath: the June 4 demonstrations; *Camera Geijutsu* 1960 July), which depict the protest demonstration at the Diet on June 4, 1960, beginning with a flag fluttering in the sunlight in front of the Diet building followed by close-up photographs of the protesters’ facial expressions.

I can't sit back in silence any longer / I reject myself as a bystander / ≪ *Anpo Hantai* (No to Anpo) ≫ / Let's take part in the demonstration for the ≪ *Kokkai Kaisan* (Dissolution of the parliament) ≫ / Then / Discard the perspective and detachment of the bystander /

It's about regaining the participant-eye. (Tōmatsu 1960f: 61)

Tōmatsu was determined to face the swirling Anpo protest himself, and reject the “bystander perspective” and “detachment” that had prevailed until then and face it through the “participant’s eye.”⁷⁾ This was the result of Tōmatsu questioning himself on what he could do as a photographer and as one among several who had experienced defeat in war and living in the same present-day, instead of viewing the occupation as an event brought about by a one-sided act of remaking postwar Japan.

While explaining Tōmatsu’s photographic trajectory, bearing in mind the acquisition of the “participant’ eye,” it cannot be overlooked that the 1960 Security Treaty was a “methodological turning point” for him (Watanabe 1975: 313). It is not clear what kind of change it promoted as Tōmatsu’s reflection of the mainstream form of photographic expression at the time was merely as follows: “I didn’t think it was good at all.” However, we emphasize that the perspective of grasping the event unfolding before one’s eyes from the inner side of the people reacting to the condition of occupation, as described previously, can be considered a “methodological shift” for Tōmatsu. This approach has been practiced since earlier times. For example, Tōmatsu made the following remarks in a roundtable discussion with young photographers for a photographic magazine in 1959:

It is a fact that I took the pictures desperately without being able to stop myself and not like when you deliberately swing down a *naginata* sword from above the head. Even in that case, I think there are many instances where it comes flying toward you and you feel it on the skin (Satō, Nagano, Tanuma and Tōmatsu 1959: 144).

When we overlap this with the above-mentioned image of Tōmatsu working through the Anpo protest, it is clear that there was a moment-to-moment act of photographing as a physical response to the pressing questions that the “scene” threw at him. While tracing the “Occupation” series circa 1960, the US as seen through his eyes was initially perceived passively, as a presence that suddenly appeared and penetrated postwar life, in a manner that recreated the “primal scene” that he witnessed immediately after the defeat of the war. However, especially after going through the 1960 Anpo protest, Tōmatsu tried to subjectively recapture the never-ending US occupation as one of the “common people” from within.

4-4. Common people facing the US as an “invisible state”

After the Anpo protest, works of the late 1960s that took upon “Americanization” or “occupation” as the direct subject included: “*Heiwa kōshin<retsu no Nakano imēzi>*” (Peace march<The image between the lines>; *Asahi Camera* 1961 October), which was released in 1961 and captured the demonstration march headed toward the World Conference against the Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb; “*Amerika taishikan*” (US Embassy; *Camera Mainichi* 1964

TABLE 1.
Sections and images in *Nippon* (1967; created by the first author based on Tōmatsu 1967)

| | Section (year of release) |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 (13 pictures) | “ <i>Fukidamari</i> ” (Destination of drifters; 1959, including text by Tarō Yamamoto) |
| 2 (16 pictures) | “Mount <i>Osorezan</i> ” (1959, including text by Takahiko Okada) |
| 3 (9 pictures) | “ <i>Asufaruto</i> ” (Asphalt; 1962, including text by Tatsuo Fukushima) |
| 4 (10 pictures) | “ <i>Fūkē</i> ” (Scene; 1962) |
| 5 (12 pictures) | “ <i>Machi</i> ” (Town; Including text by Mitsuharu Itō) |
| | “ <i>Setomono no machi</i> ” (Town of chinaware; 1955) |
| | “ <i>Orimono no machi</i> ” (Town of woven fabric; 1966) |
| 6 (16 pictures) | “ghost town” (1958, some released in 1964, including text by Kōji Taki) |
| 7 (10 pictures) | “ <i>Chindon</i> ” (Drumbeat; 1961, including text by Toshiro Ishidō) |
| 8 (18 pictures) | “ <i>Ie</i> ” (House; 1960, including text by Arata Isozaki) |
| 9 (53 pictures) | “ <i>Senryō</i> ” (Occupation; 1960 through 1967, including text “note” at the end) |
| Editorial afterword | |

September), which was photographed when Reischauer served as the US Ambassador to Japan; and “Americanization” (*Camera Mainichi* November 1964), which captured young people playing cards on the beach, with concession stands showcasing advertisements for Coca-Cola. The catalogue *Nippon* (Japan; 1967) reorganized part of these works and included the “Japanese” series mentioned in the previous subsection and collections of works released from 1955 to 1967.⁸⁾ This catalogue comprises 157 pictures divided into 9 sections as shown in TABLE 1.

In this composition, the last section “*Senryō*” (Occupation) is of particular interest because Tōmatsu restructured the above-mentioned works that he had photographed and published between 1960 and 1961 while incorporating the new ones he took on a later date. This is seen in TABLE 1 and was also identified by Yoshimura (1970) in his critique, which we reviewed in Section 2. This shows how Tōmatsu recaptured the meaning of the continued condition of occupation through his photographic activities as he experienced the 1960 Anpo protest.

We take a closer look at the specific structure of this “Occupation” section. As seen in TABLE 2, the “Occupation” section is classified into four “blocks,” where the first captures the image of US soldiers, women, and residents coming and going through the bases and surrounding towns, which we described in the previous subsection; the second focuses on the expression of each individual “mixed-race child;” the third is organized around the scenes of anti-base protesters marching for their cause; and the fourth block revisits the towns around the bases and registers the image of American soldiers as individuals. None of these photos have titles or captions. Instead, an editorial afterword titled “Note” is inserted at the end of the catalogue.

The following points are relevant here. First, as seen in the third block, pictures portraying the towns around the bases, which we described in the previous subsection, and photographs of demonstrations, mainly of protests against US military bases, were added in the “Occupation” section. This means that the occupation was expressed from a complex

TABLE 2.
Organizational blocks of “Occupation” (created by the first author based on Tōmatsu 1967)

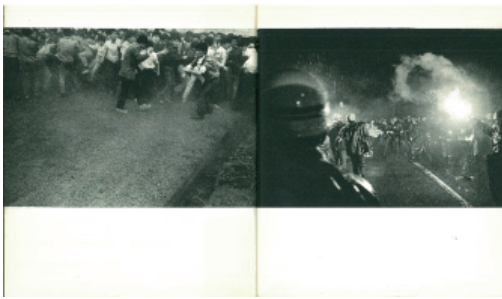
| Block | Theme |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 (24 pictures) | <i>Kichi no machi to hito</i> (The town and people of the base) |
| 2 (7 pictures) | <i>Shūhen no kodomotachi</i> (Children in the vicinity) |
| 3 (11 pictures) | <i>Han-kichi wo uttaeru demo-tai</i> (Crowd of protesters against bases) |
| 4 (11 pictures) | <i>Kichi no “hito”</i> (The “individuals” of the base) |

TABLE 3.
List of the original publications of pictures included in “Occupation”
(created by the first author based on Tōmatsu 1967)

| Time of release | Title of work | Title of magazine | Shoot location |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| January 1960 | “HARLEM (Black Town)” | <i>Asahi Camera</i> | Yokosuka |
| February 1960 | “Gaze” | <i>Asahi Camera</i> | Chitose |
| March 1960 | “Children in the vicinity” | <i>Asahi Camera</i> | Misawa |
| April 1960 | “IWAKUNI <i>Iwakuni</i> IWAKUNI” | <i>Chūō Kōron</i> | Iwakuni |
| June 1960 | “Cage” | <i>Camera Mainichi</i> | Tokyo ⁹⁾ |
| November 1960 | “The boy’s house—the mixed-race child of Kanagawa prefecture Yamato city Minami Rinkan” | <i>Fujin Kōron</i> | Chūō Rinkan |
| October 1961 | “Peace march <the image between the lines>” | <i>Asahi Camera</i> | Sagami Ōtsuka |
| September 1964 | “US Embassy” | <i>Camera Mainichi</i> | Central Tokyo |
| January 1965 | “Shinjuku (Collaborative production series)” | <i>Camera Mainichi</i> | Central Tokyo |

perspective by integrating the presence of people raising their voices and accepting the matter as their own contemporary issue into that which was the subject of focus until then: The towns in the vicinities of the bases that were reshaped by the US. Second, as explained in Section 3, Tōmatsu tried to capture the postwar Americanization in the inseparable bonds between Japan and the US. We articulate these two points while considering Tōmatsu’s inner thoughts and emotions as registered in the original publications in which the pictures used in “Occupation” first appeared. TABLE 3 presents information on the original publications of the pictures according to the time of release, work and magazine titles, and shoot location based on the editorial note that Tōmatsu had attached at the end of “Occupation.” This collection also included other works that had not been previously published in magazines.

In the same text, Tōmatsu specified the shoot locations for the pictures included in “Occupation” as “Nagasaki, Sasebo; Yamaguchi, Iwakuni; Kanagawa, Yokosuka/Sagami-Ōtsuka/Chūō-Rinkan; Tokyo, Central Tokyo/Tachikawa/Yokota/Sunagawa; Aomori, Misawa; Hokkaidō, Chitose” (Tōmatsu 1967). Comparing this information with that of previously released works shown in TABLE 3, we can see that the newly added unpublished photographs were mainly shot in Sasebo, Yokota, and Sunagawa (Tachikawa). The images of the protesters (Picture 1 and others), including those in the 1967 Sunagawa Base Struggle, were added newly.¹⁰⁾ This shows that Tōmatsu focused on the disposition of people protesting against the base, which remained on Japanese soil even after the restoration of sovereignty and was poised to expand. As Picture 2 shows, following the series of pictures registering intense



Picture 1. The feel of protesters



Picture 2. Riot policemen and the US Embassy

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protest activities, the very next page bore pictures of the silhouettes of riot policemen under the rain standing side by side, resembling a wall and the American flag hoisted on the rooftop of the US Embassy building. By examining the original publication in which the latter picture first appeared, “*Amerika taishikan*: (US Embassy; *Camera Mainichi* 1964, September), it is clear that a recursive view was alive, which sought to recapture the Japan of that time through the US within it.

This work comprised pictures of the inside of the US Embassy when Reischauer served as the US Ambassador to Japan. We must pay close attention to the texts that Tōmatsu wrote with these photographs. First, he described the “informal” Americans as “men wearing jeans, wearing aloha-shirts, smoking a lucky strike while strumming the guitar” and “women chatting away while eating popcorn, drinking Coca-Cola, and chewing gum” (Tōmatsu 1964a; 39). Then, he explained that, in contrast, those who worked at the Embassy, which is an agency representing the country of such Americans, appeared “formal” and different from the stereotype held by the Japanese, and represented another facet of the same US. Tōmatsu explained that:

At present, Japan is under the influence of the US. Whatever the US does has ramifications for Japan. In any event, it is necessary to know about the US. (Tōmatsu 1964a; 39)

Tōmatsu’s perspective that the bonds between Japan and the US are inseparable is evident. Thus, knowing a lot about the US led to thinking about the Japan that existed at the same point in time. This overlapped with the shift from the intense encounter with the US in the wake of defeat in war, which was accompanied by a certain sense of chasm, to the acceptance of the US and a sense of co-existence in the same time period. Tōmatsu referred to Ruth Benedict’s study of the society and mind of Japan through the lives of the Japanese living in the US that was published in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* to explain that her methodology continues to be valid and by “exchanging the pen for the camera,” he pondered whether he “could use this approach the other way around” (ibid.: 39). Tōmatsu sought to capture the “US that exists within” Japan while being aware of its duality; the “informal” US and its

consumeristic culture permeating into daily life, on the one hand, and the “formal” US as a nation on the other hand.

However, Tōmatsu tried to reveal the disposition of the US as a nation rather than as a consumeristic culture. For instance, in an interview around the time in question, when asked about his target, Tōmatsu offered an “answer that was along the lines of revealing the true image of the ‘state’” (Okada 1968: 157). After visiting Okinawa for the first time in 1969, he mentioned the following in a newspaper article:

However, Americanization can only be <seen> on the phenomenal dimension. The depth of suffering should be measured in the abstraction, in the deep part of the political and economic institutions and in what we call capital. However, the deep part of institutions is not visible. It is as invisible as the television waves running through the air. The television waves pass through a visible window, the receiver, and only then appear in front of us as images. Americanization may be like the television waves. The essence of the “occupation” may not be visible to our eyes. However, Okinawa remains, to this day, an occupied area placed under the trusteeship of the US where The High Commissioner appointed by the US Secretary of Defense is the supreme authority carrying out military-first policies. Wouldn’t it be possible to say that the base Okinawa is a receiver projecting the “occupation?” (*Yomiuri Shinbun Evening Edition* 1969, April 24).

Tōmatsu did not necessarily perceive the “phenomenal dimension” of “Americanization” represented in consumerist culture as the essence of “occupation.” Using the metaphor of television waves to refer to the political and economic institutions that are not visible to the naked eye, Tōmatsu sought to capture the essence through the base, that is, the receiver. This corresponds to his comment in which he expressed wanting to reveal the true image of a “state.” That said, we can see that the image of the American flag on the Embassy’s rooftop represents a “formal” image of the US as a nation. When this image is combined with that of the riot policemen on the left, it suggests the embodiment of the nation standing firmly in front of the people who raised their voices against the occupying regime, which are the images portrayed on the previous pages. As for the pictures that follow that of the Embassy—the cheerful facial expressions of American soldiers outside their uniforms and in regular clothes and of soldiers enjoying their day off—we see that Tōmatsu captured these as one person among many others living on the margins of a gigantic national power, the US. Here, Tōmatsu’s gaze moves back and forth between “common people” and the “state,” which regulates people’s lives from the depths.

As for the “note” section, considering the recursive view that seeks to recapture the present Japan through the US that exists within and the sharp tension between the “state” and the “common people” that was enshrined in this view, we emphasize that Tōmatsu reevaluated his

experience as a subject that was occupied immediately after the defeat. The underlying theme of this section was “democracy,” which was sown by the US only to have its buds nipped soon after, throughout a period of about two decades after the defeat.

In Tōmatsu’s words, in postwar Japan “people were struggling in the depths of poverty and short of all the necessities they need to survive” and the occupying forces distributed large quantities of food and prevented the spread of infectious diseases through measures such as spraying DDT. Much like the ambivalence toward the US felt by others living at the time, which we discussed above, in such a process, people’s earnest eyes toward the occupying forces shifted from “anxiety to relief and from relief to envy” (Tōmatsu 1967). During this time, people’s consciousness of the occupying forces changed and Tōmatsu heard the word “democracy.” Curious eyes and craving hands wondered about these US bases and admiration and calculation converged, wherein Tōmatsu perceived it as an “outlet of democracy.” From here, the “seeds of a democracy with the motto of freedom and equality” were sown in “Japanese soil.” Nevertheless, 22 years after surrender, the occupation continued, and its objective shifted according to rapid changes in world geopolitics. Tōmatsu explained that even though “the occupying bases were the guarding soldiers of democracy,” in the beginning, they “were susceptible and responsive and their faces changed” to conclude as follows:

However, in the wake of the Korean War, and now under the war that has spread to Vietnam, the character of the bases in Japan changed to that of a logistical and supply center for the US military. Here, we witness the two changing faces of the US over time. The US that sowed the seeds of democracy in Japan and the US that nipped democracy in the bud. (Tōmatsu 1967)

Tōmatsu’s perspective on “Americanization” focused on dynamic interconnectedness between the US as a “state” and “common people” of the time. Tōmatsu noted that the US then was by no means the same as it was immediately after the surrender, when it preached democracy, as a personal firsthand experience. It was a transformation of the “US that exists within” that Tōmatsu, who experienced defeat and occupation, felt as a bodily sensation in the course of daily life. This transformation was evident in his earnest attempt to register the 1960 Anpo protest not as a “bystander” but with a “participant’s eye.”

4-5. The struggle with the fading of the postwar resolution

Along the lines of the image of the common people facing the “states” as individuals, Tōmatsu sensed how postwar Japan, enlarging through high economic growth, was shaping people’s daily lives. Just as we saw the transformation of the US that nipped democracy in the bud, Tōmatsu’s feelings of dismay against the imminent reduction to formality happening to the values of “democracy” and “peace” that were earnestly coveted in the wake of the

defeat became apparent. “1970 *nen: zenya*” (Year 1970: the eve), a serial publication in *Camera Mainichi* that came after the release of *Nippon*, is one of the works that expresses the issue described here. This collection covered the “big events” of Japan in 1970—namely, “Anpo protest,” “pollution problems,” and “World Expo”—and Tōmatsu came to grips with such events that were “points of contention where the energies of the institution and anti-institution clashed intensely” (Tōmatsu 1970f: 77). With the intertwined relationship between “the nation” and “the people,” described above, we examine “*Banpaku-yarō*” (Expo guy; May issue) first.¹¹⁾ In this work, Tōmatsu argued that while “Progress and Harmony of Mankind” was raised as the theme of the Expo, as for inconvenient events—such as “war, poverty, pollution problems, atomic bomb, violent extremist students, housing shortage, traffic congestion,” etc.—, that do not conform to the theme of the event, “everything is diluted in water or avoided with abstract expressions,” and he exposed his fury over the fact that blood tax was being used for the “enhancement of the national prestige of Japan as a nation of great power” (Tōmatsu 1970a; 87, 90). Of particular importance is that Tōmatsu cast a stern eye on the Japanese exhibitions as seen below:

In the five cylindrical buildings that represent cherry blossoms, the symbol mark of the Expo, the past, present, and future of Japan are crammed into a container. However, the history of Japan chosen there merely comprised proud moments of power. The work of the vast majority of people who had truly borne the history of Japan and were now creating it had been masterly cut. (Tōmatsu 1970a: 88)

Tōmatsu placed the image of the people as the agents who constantly created history. In contrast with the glamour of the Osaka World Expo in the following month’s issue, Tōmatsu shed light on another reality unfolding at the same time on the side of “progress and harmony of mankind,” through the daily lives of day laborers living in Kamagasaki (Tōmatsu 1970b). Tōmatsu’s gaze toward the common people hidden in the shadows of a prospering nation was coupled with the growing pollution problems of the time. He captured the “mining pollution disaster in the Watarase-gawa river basin,” defining it as a long ongoing issue by tracing it back to the Ashio copper mine poisoning incident in the Meiji period (Tōmatsu 1970e: 47).¹²⁾

Finally, we examine Tōmatsu’s thoughts and emotions in the wake of the “Anpo” protest while bearing in mind his views on the 1970 “World Expo” and “pollution problem” described above. At the time, Tōmatsu revived the atmosphere he sensed on the eve of war in the 1930s while living what seemed a “peaceful” quotidian life at first glance. For instance, he wrote about a person—who spent his youth in a “period of madness when silence and clamor mixed in the disarray” of the 1930s, just before the outbreak of World War II, and after serving in the military, reached retirement age in contemporary Japan that had become an economic superpower—muttering that everything resembled the 1930s, but he would no longer be sent

to war because of his old age. Tōmatsu said:

It is said that history repeats itself, but it is also said that it doesn't. In any case, as someone who was born in the 1930s, it is obvious that I don't have a clear memory of Japan of the 1930s. But the heavy words of those who lived through that time awakens the old blood in me. Little by little, I begin to think: "Either way, maybe that is how it was." (Tōmatsu 1970c: 109)

Tōmatsu's experience of the eve of the World War in the 1930s, as a historical experience that had been dormant in his body, was strongly triggered by the turbulent situation of the time, starting with the escalation of the Vietnam War. While recalling the death of Michiko Kanba in front of the Diet building in the 1960 Anpo protest, a decade later, Tōmatsu attempted to view the "present" from different perspectives simultaneously as shown below.

The next day, when we demonstrated around the parliament in protest of state violence, the sky was dark, and it was drizzling. This year, on June 15, it is raining as it was a decade ago... The world has changed in the past ten years. I myself am not exactly the same as I was ten years ago. As I stare at the rain washing the ground below my feet, I now think about how people have lived and are continuing to live, given that 10 years have passed since the Anpo protest (Tōmatsu 1970d: 87).

This depiction of Japan 25 years after the defeat, reflected in the eyes of a photographer who captured the scars of the anti-war demonstrations on a rainy day that was just like the day exactly a decade ago, illustrates Tōmatsu's unbearable feeling toward the process in which the ideals of "democracy" and "peace" became nominal; ideals that seeped out of the bases of the occupying forces along with "affluence" right after defeat. These feelings transformed into an even more acute questioning within Tōmatsu, as he directed himself toward the turmoil of Okinawa's reversion to Japanese control in around 1970 and witnessed the reality he described as "Okinawa is in the bases."

When the people of Okinawa cry out to "return to the mainland," it means returning to the Peace Constitution of Japan that renounced the war. Now that this Peace Constitution is a dead letter, where will Okinawa return? The bases will be kept, two bloods of Japan and the US flow among the people of Okinawa—Even if the return becomes a decisive fact, "Okinawa is in the bases." I can't forget the eyes of the people of Okinawa when they see the people of the mainland. At the same time, I feel ashamed of myself as a person of the mainland who could do nothing about the decadence of the homeland. (Tōmatsu 1970g)

In sum, at the start of project, Tōmatsu captured the image of every ordinary person who had no choice but to embody the tension at the “interface” between pre-war and postwar stages, Japan and the US, while overlapping this with his own sense of life in the post-defeat years. Then, from the late 1950s, he placed his watchful eyes on “Americanization,” which shaped the livelihoods of people, through the condition of occupation that remained even after the restoration of Japanese sovereignty. Here, “Americanization” in Tōmatsu’s eyes seeped from the US military bases remaining in various parts of the Japanese archipelago and was passively received as an entity that “reshapes” while absorbing sentiments of repulsion. As discussed in Section 3, this is also significant in that it renders the US visible as the occupier, a portrayal that is rooted in Tōmatsu’s “primal scene” experience. However, this was no longer as prominently visible in the mainland, where the presence of bases was diminishing.

However, as the times changed with the 1960 Anpo protest as a turning point, Tōmatsu re-captured the US subjectively and recursively by transitioning from the acceptance of the US that brought with it a certain intense chasm to the realization that knowing about the US of that time would lead to knowing about Japan. Here, we must pay attention to the fact that what was in front of Tōmatsu’s eyes was his own “primal scene” and no longer the US as a “liberator” who distributed “chewing gum and chocolate” and sowed seeds of democracy in Japanese soil in the wake of surrender. This was the US as an “invisible state” that nipped democracy in the bud in response to rapid changes in global geopolitics at the time, such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars. It was the US that stood tall in front of individuals who raised their voices against occupation, which continued even after independence, including Tōmatsu.

Finally, Tōmatsu continued to keep his eyes on the sharp tension between these “nations” and “individuals” throughout his work in Okinawa in 1970 and Japan, which had achieved prosperity. Tōmatsu stood in the shoes of one person among many living the same era and directed his gaze toward the way of life of “individuals” as agents who created history but remained overshadowed by the nation, while Japan, 25 years after defeat in war, emerged as one of the world’s leading economic powers. Tōmatsu carried sentiments of ambivalence for the “present” time in which the “postwar resolutions” of “democracy” and “peace” were inevitably becoming dead letters.

5. The meanings of defeat in war and people’s deaths continue to be questioned

We conclude this paper with a deeper discussion of the significance of Tōmatsu’s insistence on looking at “Americanization” in the context of his experience of defeat in the war and his firsthand experience of life after war. First, we found that, there was a strong focus not only on the “phenomenal aspects” of such “Americanization” in Japan after the defeat, such as customs and lifestyles, but also on the acceptance of “democracy with the motto of freedom and equality.” This is in line with the argument that Americanization as an “ideology” can be

understood as an interplay between the “‘enlightenment’ from above of American democracy” by the occupying forces backed by the overwhelming military power of the atomic bomb and the ideological foundations of the people who had accepted it (Yasuda 2005: 278).

However, this was not “enlightenment” imposed unilaterally by the occupiers, the US, onto postwar Japan, but was rather deep-rooted in each person’s firsthand experience of defeat in war. It was a promise to the future engraved in the Preamble to the Constitution that came out of the people’s response to the concrete landscape of destruction and ruins they witnessed in 1945 (Tsurumi 2005: 6-7) and was also a determination to be satisfied by the actions performed on the ground in each “site” after the war (Oda 1986: 219). Through photography, Tōmatsu continued to look at the following question as his own problem: Where will the values of “democracy” and “peace” that were so strongly sought in the context of a “gap” between “enlightenment” by the occupying forces and the raw physical feeling in the midst of the ruins go? Tōmatsu sensed the contradictions and anguish in the daily lives of common people from the “mixed-race child” in downtown to the people raising their voices in the Anpo protest. Tōmatsu was driven to “continue to photograph” postwar Japan by this undeniable reality that the “occupation” was not over but was rather becoming more complex.

One of the major keys to consider the “occupation” and “Americanization” as Tōmatsu’s driving force was the bodily sensation that became imprinted within him before and after the defeat. Here, we reiterate the importance of Tōmatsu, who survived the turmoil during and after the war, being one of the “children from wartime that you can identify if you are in the postwar stage” (Tōmatsu 1987: 142). This is because the difference in experience between this generation and the pre-war and wartime generations before Tōmatsu, who were sent to the battlefield, or the generation born after the war, who did not know war, is thought to have had a nontrivial influence on the manner in which people dealt with the postwar period mentioned above. For example, Makoto Oda (1932-2007) was of the same generation as Tōmatsu and led the aforementioned “Beheiren” group against the Vietnam War. In tracing the ideological path of him, Kazuomi Hirai pointed out three common experiences that are unique to this generation “born around the time of the Manchurian Incident” in the early 1930s. First, while facing the atrocious experiences of wartime such as air raids, they received strong imperial education under the pre-war imperial regime. Second, while transitioning from childhood to young adulthood, they faced “great changes in social values” after being defeated in war. Third, they were “a generation that felt an atmosphere of freedom and equality firsthand” in the ruins of the postwar period (Hirai 2019: 14). As mentioned in the third point above, it is particularly important that this generation breathed the air of postwar democracy as a “bodily sensation” amid feelings of shock and skepticism toward the militarists of yesterday who turned into democrats in the blink of an eye. This common experience of witnessing war and death with “awakened” eyes became the “frame of reference” that each of them repeatedly returned to while gazing at postwar society (ibid.: 19-20). For example, this was seen in

Makoto Oda's explanation of the "meaningless deaths" of countless human beings, in other words, "*nanshi*," which he witnessed in the ruins after the Great Air Raid on Osaka that was carried out the day before Japan's surrender. This means that the reality of "meaningless deaths" were emblazoned in Oda's mind and he continued to question its meaning through life in the postwar era (Oda 2008: 4-6).

The very real feeling of "do not kill" became imprinted on Oda's body (Oda 2008: 240), following his experience of coming face-to-face with numerous deaths and resting on the realization that we as individuals are completely powerless against an overwhelming armed force. As we argued in a previous paper (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021), this goes hand in hand with Tōmatsu's experience of accepting as "legacy" the "burned houses, shattered roof tiles, and the grudge and fury of those who were killed like futile worms" (Tōmatsu 1966: 48) and surviving the "starvation hell" that followed immediately. Thus, the experience of death in the ruins as a bodily sensation was imprinted in Tōmatsu, who kept a watchful eye on the postwar state as a photographer. Tōmatsu's starting point was always his inner feeling of: "I absolutely do not want war" and "I do not want to go through defeat ever again" (Tōmatsu 1984a: 103). Through the act of photographing, he questioned this "primal scene" again and again and dealt with the rapid transformation of a postwar society.

Tōmatsu perceived within himself the "Americanization" that permeated through postwar Japan from the "twist" of obliterating memories of military violence of the occupation period and enjoying its affluence as an event that would always involve the unforgettable deaths brought about by the nation-state in the past. For example, as detailed in our previous paper, this is evident in Tōmatsu's posture, as he continued to watch over the countless deaths caused by the atomic bomb and the scars of the never-ending war in the fully reconstructed city of Nagasaki. Tōmatsu witnessed firsthand reality in which the daily lives of individuals living in the same era as himself were at the mercy of the invisible nations of Japan and the US and were at times subject to relentless violence. This led to what he later considered the risk of Japan participating in the nuclear war of the US and that "people," including himself, could end up standing on the opposite side of "killing" (Tōmatsu 1984a: 103-104). By photographing "Americanization" in the 1950s and 1960s, Tōmatsu came to gain a consciousness that imploded the state and its logic that lead people's lives around by the nose; a process fueled by the his own bodily sensation gained through living in between life and death.¹³⁾ This aspect of Tōmatsu can be confirmed in his mourning of the countless deaths of American soldiers and Vietnamese people in the Vietnam War, which took place at the time, and his empathy for American deserters, rather than in his attitude toward the people living in Japan alone (Tōmatsu 1968). During the Vietnam War, Tōmatsu explained the act of continuing to capture everyday life as follows:

Photography, in essence, is a record. Photographs cut out the time that progresses. The

time that is cut out by the camera becomes the past from that instant, and the photograph becomes history itself as an accumulation of moments.... When I press the shutter, the total amount of history I have lived is thrown at the subject, and my time is combined with the time of the object and bears fruit in a single photograph. Therefore, a photograph is both a small part of my experience and the sum of all my experiences. (Tōmatsu 1968: 39)

This way, Tōmatsu's act of photographing took place at the intersection of his life and the event in front of his eyes. It was a moment-to-moment capture of the lives of individuals who faced the 'US that exists within Japan' in their own ways in the course of their postwar lives that Tōmatsu continued to chronicle as history. He did so as an individual who experienced the unparalleled event of defeat in war, and with a sense of duty as a witness to the turbulent times that followed. As a node tying the "Japanese" and "Occupation" series, Tōmatsu reflected on the history of discrimination and expropriation of Okinawa in the hands of the mainland from his position as "one of the people of the mainland" and continued to keep his gaze on the islands until his last years. In the process, he set Americanization aside to look into the way of life that had been practiced on the islands since ancient times, and crossed the country lines to extend his exploration to Southeast Asia. As a future research project, from the viewpoint on postwar Japan clarified here, we would like to further our understanding of how Tōmatsu continued to capture the activities of people living under "occupation" in Okinawa.

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Notes

- 1) This refers to a dispute that arose in *Asahi Camera* through its September to November issues in 1960, on the new directions of photographic expression at the time between Yōnosuke Natori, who had been leading "assembled pictures (photojournalism)" since the pre-war times, and Tōmatsu, who opposed such photographic expressions of the earlier generation that emphasized on the story. Tōmatsu was particularly repulsed by how "assembled pictures (photojournalism)" played a central role in promoting fabricated foreign propaganda during the Fifteen Year war. See our previous paper for details (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021).
- 2) Atsuyuki Nakahara explained that Tōmatsu photographed these series as if he was searching for the ghost of his father, from whom he was separated in childhood. Thus, he felt "unpleasant, as if a family member was being insulted" in reaction to a critic's comment that referred to his

work as “satire” (Nakahara 1999: 169).

- 3) Iizawa mentioned that a common experience of photographers born in the early 1930s was the emptiness of the blue sky as they looked up standing among the ruins on the day of the defeat (Iizawa 2008: 71-72). We argued in a previous paper (Yoshinari and Miyoshi 2021) that Tōmatsu’s postwar life was profoundly defined by the conflicting emotions and thoughts he experienced within a continuous time from wartime to the occupation period and he did not experience it as disconnected from the past.
- 4) The first time Tōmatsu’s work was introduced outside Japan was as part of an exhibition titled “New Japanese Photography” held in New York 1974 (Szarkowski 1974: 10) but his works remained relatively unknown in the West until the first retrospective exhibition titled “Skin of the Nation,” which was also held in New York in 2004 (Yeoh 2013: 105).
- 5) However, critiques have mentioned that Tōmatsu expressed sympathy for black soldiers in an interview (Holborn 1986; etc.), which is discussed in Section 3.
- 6) This refers to people as “each individual” dealing with the historical experience of defeat in war in the context of their own lives and not as a “mass” or “agglomeration” of people (Amano 1996: 82).
- 7) In this work, most pictures were not only a roadside view of marching demonstrators, but photographs taken from inside the processions.
- 8) This was Tōmatsu’s second photobook following <11:02> *NAGASAKI* (1966), which comprised pictures of the damage caused by the atomic bomb in Nagasaki that Tōmatsu started taking in 1961.
- 9) This is confirmed in later works (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum 2007).
- 10) However, the shoot location for each picture is not specified, so it is not possible to determine it with precision. For instance, Yū Hidaka referred to the pictures we present in this paper as Pictures 1 and 2 and explained that these are “group-photographs” showing the protesters of the Anpo protest and explored their symbolism (Hidaka 2004: 123-125). When these were cross-checked against records of the Sunagawa Base protest that took place around the same time (Hoshi 2013; etc.), it appeared that at least two pictures—the fifth and seventh ones in the third block—were images of the 1967 Sunagawa protest.
- 11) This work was submitted to the booklet “Special Number: EXPO’ 70 and its Images” attached to that month’s issue.
- 12) In the collection titled “Tracing back the root causes of pollution problems” (November issue), Tōmatsu published the pictures of the mining pollution victims in the Watarase-gawa River basin, who were photographed during the Meiji period. He also published the pictures of mine workers protesting the issue. He included images of residents presenting their anger at their failed crops owing to the ongoing mining pollution of the water, of manufacturing plants releasing smog into the air, and of workers in the mine.
- 13) This point was inspired by Akira Kurihara’s discussion of postwar consciousness in which he

explained that one form of consciousness was “the consciousness that implodes the nation” (Kurihara 2005: 203-205).

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