

CHILDREN OF DESTINY: IDEOGRAPH AND IDENTITY IN

*MOMOTARŌ · UMI NO SHINPEI*

THESIS

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For Ryan

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## INTRODUCTION

Japanese film critic Tsumura Hideo wrote of the Japanese spirit in 1943 that it is "a thing of intuition, making difficult, nay foolish, all efforts to expound upon it rationally" (qtd. in High 390). He added as well that "if foreigners were able to get a firm understanding of the nature of the Japanese Spirit . . . it would be like stealing the plans to our country's best weapon" (390). While Tsumura himself dismissed such an occurrence as impossible owing to its being "far beyond the comprehension of any foreigner," his concern reflects a core belief of the age that the development of the Japanese spirit [日本精神; *nippon seishin*] imbued the Japanese people with an exceptional ability to overcome adversity through strength of moral purity (390). At the root of the spirit lay neither technological prowess nor logic-oriented philosophy. Rather, the heart and soul the Japanese spirit was the Japanese identity itself, perceived as a sacred inheritance unlike anything else on earth (223-24). This moral superiority, if properly cultivated, could lead the Japanese people to victory regardless of the strength of the foes arrayed against them.

However, as Peter B. High observes, the spirit did not spring forth unbidden even in the hearts of native sons of the islands: "although it is a natural endowment, the presence slips easily into absence. Furthermore, it requires great struggle on all levels . . . for it to be 'realized' in the world" (390). During the Pacific War, a portion of the task of encouraging and cultivating this refinement of the soul fell to writers and producers of

Japanese film, under whose stewardship the struggle of a noble hero to actualize his pure spirit and Japanese identity became a genre unto itself. According to High, this body of "spirtist" film "creates its own hermetically sealed world, retelling essentially the same story (about the spiritual development of a young 'Everyman' hero), while sharing the same code of incantatory language and images" (387). Additionally, as Darrel William Davis observes, many films also glorified traditional Japanese culture through "a canonization of the past, a celebration of traditional aesthetics, and an exaltation of hierarchic family structures, particularly the patriarchal formations of *bushido*, the way of the warrior" (39). Taken as a whole, then, much of Pacific War film concerns itself primarily with the process of cultivating the expression of the Japanese identity.

From a Western perspective, there would appear at first little need for encouraging a sense of national and cultural awareness among the Japanese. However, beginning during the Meiji period (1868-1912) this agenda was of prime importance to Imperial Japanese policymakers, who believed that a key to successful modernization was the creation of a new, composite national identity which could override the traditional loyalties and affiliations which served as the traditional focal points of identity formation (Gluck 23-25). That decades later during the Pacific War (1931-1945) this constructed ideology had become a functional reality which seemed as ancient as the Empire's mythic origins is in large part due to the fittingness of the propagation of that ideology, which, as I shall demonstrate, in turn owes its potent impact to the high-context nature of Japanese language and culture.

In Japanese as in any language, the relative degree of involvement of readers in the construction of meaning in texts both depends upon the native language of the reader,

which is in turn informed by the reader's culture (Hinds 141). This phenomenon is discussed at length by Edward T. Hall, who asserts that most cultures can be placed along a continuum and judged as relatively high-context or low-context, meaning that a member of the given culture assumes either that his audience shares certain knowledge with him or that he cannot presume such a shared experience, respectively (6). Such culturally dependent frameworks shape the social grammar of the language and all communications taking place within it (Kress and van Leeuwen 3). Thus, language and culture are inescapably fused, each simultaneously informing and informed by the other.

A similar pattern can be identified when confronting patterns of visual communication, though there are some differences to consider. Charles A. Hill argues that "images, which are comprehended wholistically [*sic*] and almost instantaneously, tend to prompt heuristic processing" and that the emotionally overwhelming nature of visual presentations thus tends to force the mind into patterns of rapid decision making that override analytical, abstract processes typical of verbal communication (33). It may be assumed, then, that individuals, when presented with strong visual stimuli, process and interact with those stimuli according to an experiential and culturally relevant framework, which in turn is dependent upon the constraints placed upon thought by language.

Kress and van Leeuwen propose that this framework constitutes a visual grammar, which depends upon both linguistic grammar and cultural values and is limited by the experiential frames of reference readily available to a given group (3). Groups literate in a given visual grammar construct analogies which associate elements considered most alike according to the culture and language of the group into syntagmic relationships (79). "Communication," according to Kress and van Leeuwen, "requires that participants



make their messages maximally understandable in a particular context. They therefore choose forms of expression which they believe to be maximally transparent to other participants" (13). Thus, members of a group tend to assume that others not only understand the frames of reference common to the group, but that they also employ them when communicating. As a result, no work intended for consumption by society at large can hope to effectively convey its message unless it assumes and depends upon dominant social perspectives and frames of reference. Only by resonating with such positions can a text or image hope to capture the attention of that group.

Michael Calvin McGee argues that such dominant frames of reference tend to consist of interdependent networks of ideographs, "high-order abstraction[s] representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal" (15). Ideographs reinforce cultural values and serve to classify those things with which they are associated as falling within or without the boundaries of acceptable behavior in a given community (15-16). Due to their dependence on language and culture, McGee notes, they are additionally culture specific, and members of a given society are "socialized, conditioned, to the vocabulary of ideographs as a prerequisite for 'belonging' to the society" (15). Successfully employed, ideographs facilitate mass appeal to a collective sense of identity and can be used to guide group thought and behavior. As a result, any appeal to a population, whether textual or visual, must demonstrate fluency in the ideographs that dictate membership in the community.

In the case of cultural and visual frameworks employed in Japanese film, such assumptions operate with even more certainty. Hinds observes that Japanese is a language in which "it is the responsibility of the listener (or reader) to understand what it is that the

speaker or author had intended to say" (144). This method is reinforced by a sense that the Japanese as a people possess a common foundation of shared knowledge (144). Because of this shared status with the reader, it is unnecessary for the writer to repeat knowledge considered to be culturally communal, as the reader is capable of inserting it on his own in order to achieve full understanding of the text (151). By extension, the composition of Japanese film likewise depends heavily upon the assumption that the audience shares with the filmmaker an extensive repertoire of cultural knowledge in the form of an ideographic network the invocation of which is sufficient to achieve deep and multifaceted rhetorical effect on the audience.

In order to better understand the role of visual ideographs in identity formation within Japanese culture, this study examines the ideographs that inform depictions of identity in the 1945 animated film *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei* [桃太郎 海の神兵; *Momotarō: Divine Sea Warriors*]. Specifically, I address elements of history, myth, folklore, children's textbooks, popular fiction, and film as they relate to the distinction between that which is considered Japanese and that which is considered foreign.

Produced jointly by Shōchiku Pictures and the Imperial Japanese Navy and directed by Seo Mitsuyo, *Umi no shinpei* is described by Shōchiku Pictures' website as "a propaganda animated feature made during WW2 with the support by the Ministry of the Navy. Based on the story of a typical Japanese fairy-tale, Momotarō," also known as Peach Boy, who in traditional iterations of the story recruits a band of animal companions to subdue a tribe of marauding *oni*, or ogres, living on a nearby island (Shōchiku). *Umi no shinpei* re-imagines the tale within the context of the Pacific War, resulting in a narrative in which "Momotarō and his followers were presented as the prophesied 'divine

troops from an eastern land' who were destined to liberate the peoples of Southern Asia from their enemies and oppressors," who take the form of English-speaking, white-skinned humans in British military uniforms (Dower *War Without Mercy* 253). The heroes are depicted as Imperial Japanese Navy paratroopers and appear to be modeled after units deployed against British forces in 1942 (Rottman and Takizawa 27-31).

Such rendering of the folktale into contemporary terms typifies what Dower calls the Momotarō paradigm, a phenomenon wherein Momotarō, the archetypal Japanese engaging a fearsome but ultimately conquerable foe, was employed repeatedly by the Imperial Japanese government to symbolize the Japanese war effort (251-2). Dower further asserts that Momotarō as a divinely-descended figure is an *aragitogami*, or living god, potentially associating him with the Emperor (252). This supposition is echoed by Ueno Toshiya, who also observes that "[i]f we extract a common structure out of these three relationships between self and other [in the film], we get the following: Transcendental Existence/Self and Community/Aliens" (86). Considered within this context, deep connections between myth, folklore, and foreign policy become evident.

Especially significant to this study is the film's depiction of the interaction between Momotarō's animal companions and the community of animals who represent the native peoples of the South Pacific. Incapable of coherent speech and for the most part unclothed, these island-dwelling animals display a childlike fascination with their Japanese stewards: they treat the paratroopers' airplanes and equipment with fear and reverence, delight in performing manual labor at the behest of the sailors, and happily lend their assistance to the war effort once the sailors teach them Japanese (*Umi no shinpei*). Unlike the *oni*, the island animals physically resemble Momotarō's animal

companions, but their lack of apparent civilization marks them as inferior beings to be protected and guided. This arrangement reflects Ueno's hierarchy, which is in turn a distillation of the message carried by the visual ideographs that dictate the boundaries that separate Japaneseness from Otherness.

Before proceeding further, I believe it is appropriate to address the personal biases that necessarily inform my perspective in this study. To begin, I cannot claim the benefit of direct connection to the Japanese culture by virtue of descent or marriage. I am an American of primarily European descent raised by college-educated parents in an English-monolingual, middle-class household, and I am married to a spouse of similar origins. This background cannot help but inform my perception of the world.

Interest in the Japanese language and culture, however, has shaped much of my adult life, and it is from this body of experience that my interest in the subject of this study arises. My undergraduate background in Japanese language and culture led to my spending an extended period of time in Japan as an exchange student, which strengthened my admiration for the culture, and I have also dedicated myself sincerely to the incorporation of Shintō spiritual practice in my daily life for more than a decade.

Certainly, though, none of this constitutes a substitute for the experience of the native Japanese, nor do I propose to argue such a perspective. As an outsider, I cannot attain a native understanding of the material. However, I have endeavored to overcome the limitations of my non-native perspective as much as possible through the use of a theoretical framework rooted in the analysis of patterns evident in historical events and artifacts and reliance on reputable scholarship of both Japanese and non-Japanese origin.

In this way, I strive to minimize the limiting effects of my biases on the study, as

it is my sincere hope that this work might contribute to the broader understanding of the subject matter. I have conducted this study in the spirit of responsible scholarship and out of sincere respect for the nation, culture, and people of Japan. If I have in any way failed in that regard, the fault is wholly my own, though it is by no means intentional.

From my perspective, the overall value of the study lies in its making explicit the process by which ideographs govern visual composition in a high-context cultural environment and how this contributes to the formation of a distinct identity. For scholars native to or operating primarily in a low-context environment such as the United States, such an understanding is crucial to effective communication in an increasingly global scholastic community. To that end, this study is arranged in the following manner.

Chapter one comprises a review of relevant literature. Because *Umi no shinpei* is viewed through the lens of the unique historical environment of Pacific War Japan, the review of literature explores not only the rhetorical theories critical to the analysis of visual ideographs, but also scholarship that places the film and its contents within the proper cultural and historical context. Additionally, the review of literature introduces and contextualizes historical texts from which the ideographs in *Umi no shinpei* are derived in order to provide the audience with an awareness of the influence on such texts on early Shōwa (1926-1945) state ideology.

Chapter two presents an overview of two primary constraints on Japaneseness in the context of the film. The first, the Japanese language itself, is examined in its capacity to limit identity by binding cultural fluency to linguistic aptitude. I contend that the historical use of the term *kokugo*, or "national language," to refer to Japanese creates a set of sociolinguistic conditions wherein those who can speak the Japanese language may be

Japanese people under proper conditions, whereas those who cannot speak the language are excluded from identifying as Japanese. The second constraint, investment in the body of myth narrating the founding of the nation, binds identity to the hierarchy inherent in the mandate of the Imperial family to rule over the Japanese people for eternity.

In chapter three, I explore the process by which the Japanese national founding myths were reinterpreted and expanded in order to figure Japanese expansion in East Asia and the Pacific as the most recent chapter of an ongoing, ever-unfolding continuation of the mandate granted to the Imperial line in mythic times. I argue that in order for this re-imagining of history and myth to successfully bind modern identity and policy to ancient events, the state was obliged to refigure historical events and periods incompatible with the premise of unbroken Imperial rule in order to demonstrate that even during these times virtue streamed from the sovereign and affairs were conducted in accordance with divine direction.

Chapter four examines the deployment of the Momotarō narrative as a proxy for the narratives of the national founding in the transmission of state ideology to children. First, I explore the nature of the story of Momotarō, focusing especially on its repetition of the inner/outer and related pure/impure dichotomies present in much of Japanese ideology. Next, I examine the contents of government-sanctioned elementary school textbook readers which employed the Momotarō story alongside elements of the founding narratives and accounts of then-current military campaigns in East Asia. Thereafter, I examine the possible joint influence of these textbook readers and children's popular fiction, especially the "future war" genre, which envisioned conflicts between Japan and Western powers that bore uncanny resemblance to both the Momotarō and

founding narratives. Finally, I review core narrative trends in spiritist war film as they relate to the pure inner/corrupt outer dichotomy and examine the mobilization of the Momotarō narrative within this context. Taken as a whole, these elements suggest that because the story of Momotarō is equally invested in the premise of a pure inner world menaced by a corrupt outer force, Momotarō could be deployed as a friendly, universally accessible image to contextualize current policy in terms of the traditional dichotomy.

Chapter five analyzes *Umi no shinpei* through the lens established in previous chapters. Here, I examine the film scene by scene in order to preserve the narrative, which is critical to the understanding of the story given its high context nature and reliance upon the slow development of its protagonists toward spiritist transcendence. For each scene, I identify the dominant ideographs at work, where they occur, through what means they are invoked, and the net effect of their deployment on the message of the film. Through this method, I demonstrate that *Umi no shinpei*, though it superficially retells the story of Momotarō in a contemporary military setting, is more properly an iteration of the national founding myths set in the midst of the Pacific War and populated with characters from the story of Momotarō in order to increase the recognizability and relevancy of the narrative patterns at work to the film's juvenile audience.

As a final note, certain linguistic conventions are noted here for the convenience of the reader. First, Japanese names are rendered in this text in the traditional manner: surname followed by given name. Additionally, romanized Japanese words and phrases are transliterated according to the Modified Hepburn system of romanization except where an alternate spelling has become commonly accepted in the English language. Where relevant, the original Japanese text of certain words and phrases is provided.

## CHAPTER I

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to properly contextualize the analysis of *Momotarō. Umi no shinpei* presented in this study, it is first necessary to make a survey of the relevant literature to which the study refers. Those materials which comprise the theoretical and contextual foundation on which my analysis is built are presented here according to the following method of organization: the theoretical framework of the analysis, which applies a lens contextualized by Michael Calvin McGee's theory of the ideograph; literature relevant to the understanding of Japanese Pacific War film; and an overview of source documents containing the Japanese national founding myths.

The primary theoretical lens that underpins my inquiry is Michael Calvin McGee's analysis of the ideograph and its role in the propagation of ideology. This is examined in depth followed by an exploration of Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler's application of the ideograph to visual texts. These landmark studies explore the nature of both visual and textual ideographs and provide a framework by which the ideographic networks in audiovisual texts such as *Umi no shinpei* can be addressed.

Inquiries into specific historical and cultural elements of the Pacific War cinema in Japan, such as John W. Dower's exploration of the story of Momotarō as a narrative paradigm and the identity-oriented binaries that define character archetypes in Japanese war film, are critical to conceptualizing the function of ideographs in *Umi no shinpei*.



Peter B. High's analysis of the so-called spiritist films of the Pacific War in *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years' War, 1931-1945* provides critical insight into the influence of the concept of pure Japaneseness, an actualization of identity which must be attained through an experience of spiritual transcendence prompted by arduous trial. Additionally, Klaus Antoni's detailed examination of the mobilization of the Momotarō narrative as a symbol of national policy by the early Shōwa state provides insight into nature of the ideographic networks in the film.

I examine source texts containing various iterations of the national founding myths because these documents, which range from early eighth-century historical mythologies to wartime publications and textbooks, provide critical context in that they chronicle the persistence and evolution of the founding myths across time. Those elements that are retained form the core of the ideographic network upon which *Umi no shinpei* depends for a substantial portion of its meaning.

### **The Ideograph**

The core element of rhetorical theory underpinning this study is the ideograph. First proposed by Michael Calvin McGee in "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology," *ideograph* refers to "an ordinary language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined goal" (15). That is to say, ideographs are ordinary words and phrases which, for members of a given group, imply a certain philosophical or ideological orientation and which reveal patterns of motives in a society (5).

As tools of ideology, ideographs depend upon social investment in their existence, and McGee asserts that affinity for ideographs must result from prior persuasion of their

correctness (5). "Human beings are 'conditioned,' not directly to belief and behavior," he observes, "but to a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief" (6). Thus, where ideology is propagated, there must exist a battery of concepts to which the public is conditioned to react in a predetermined manner. These concepts are not governed by the ordinary constraints of the language: what the term itself may denote in a strictly linguistic sense is separate from that which it connotes ideologically. Overall, the orientation reflected in the ideograph is filtered through the lens of the culture or society in which it exists and may exist to establish the boundaries of a particular community (8). Ideographs, then, direct the performance of identity because the reaction of an individual to their use reflects that individual's commitment or lack of commitment to the ideology that defines the collective.

As highly abstracted vehicles for the propagation of ideology, ideographs are themselves difficult to define precisely and are often explained by citing situations in which the term is said to apply. As such, McGee notes that while "no one has ever seen an 'equality' strutting up the driveway . . . if 'equality' exists at all, it has meaning through its specific applications" (10). Simply put, terms such as *freedom* and *equality* depend upon prior precedent and anecdotal association for meaning. Moreover, even if the particulars of a term's signification shift over time, the term retains its association with earlier usage: "the way an ideograph can be meaningful *now* is controlled in large part by what it meant *then*" (10-11). So long as there remains a link to the past through this genealogy of usage, the potency of a particular element of ideology remains intact.

McGee further contends that because communities endeavor to preserve and maintain this vertically structured genealogy (which flows downward from older

privileged and entrenched usages to newer, less established associations), the richest depositories of such artifacts are popular history—fiction, cinema, theater, and music—and texts employed in primary education. This, McGee argues, is "the very first contact most have with their existence and experience as part of a community" (11). Such texts inculcate a sense of the meaning of those ideographs vital to identity and participation in society. This constitutes what McGee terms the vertical element of the ideograph, which he defines in Burkean terms: a culturally specific "grammar" of a given motivation (12).

This, however, fails to account for the behavior of ideographs when structured horizontally. When, McGee contends, ideographs are made to actively justify or guide policy, they may come into apparent conflict one another. In these cases, a particular ideograph may come to dominate the given situation and, "[i]n Burke's vocabulary, it becomes the 'title' or 'god-term' of all ideographs, the center-sun about which every ideograph orbits" (13). All other ideographs relevant to the society and its goals would then be subordinated to this chief term, their meanings and implications redefined within the context of the dominant ideograph. Thus, ideographs are structured vertically through time as well as horizontally in relation to one another, forming a vast interdependent network in which each element depends on all others for context and meaning.

This study considers both the vertical structure of ideographs present in *Umi no shinpei* and the horizontal relationship of those ideographs to one another. First, the deployment of the Momotarō narrative, the most explicit ideographic invocation in the film, relies upon a vertical alignment of the film's content and message with that of folklore through the use of Momotarō, his companions, and their enemies the *oni*. This cluster of images, however, is in turn subordinated to the dominant ideograph of the film,

which encapsulates the mandate to expand Japanese space as narrated by the national founding myths and supported by a vertical genealogy of usage connecting state ideology to the earliest iterations of the myths.

The matrix that binds these disparate concepts and inculcates them as markers of Japaneseness is, in accordance with McGee, a combination of popular fiction and primary school textbook readers, the latter of which take as their subject matter folktales, myths, instructional pieces on civic duty, episodes from history, and current events, among others. In examining the vertical and horizontal alignment of the ideographs in *Umi no shinpei*, we can arrive at an understanding of the influence of these ideographs on concepts of Japanese space and identity. What defines individuals as Japanese or foreign and the appropriate orientation of the audience to those things, as I will demonstrate, is inextricably linked to the film's interpenetrating ideographic network.

In addition to McGee's landmark exploration of the ideograph as an element of language, I am obliged to attend to Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler's examination of the ideographic function of visual texts in "Representative Form and the Visual Ideograph: The Iwo Jima Image in Editorial Cartoons," which examines the characteristics of editorial cartoons that parody Joel Rosenthal's iconic 1945 photograph of the flag-raising on Mount Suribachi. While much of Edwards and Winkler's article lies outside the scope of this study, of interest is their contention that images, like words, can function ideographically. Specifically, Edwards and Winkler demonstrate in their analysis that McGee's framework for assessing whether objects function ideographically is not restricted to units of language. Rather, they contend that visual ideographs, owing to their manipulability and capacity for adaptation, are capable of constraining or expanding the

subject matter invoked or even encouraging audience participation on a level not typically facilitated by words (305). In accordance with the precedents established by Edwards and Winkler in addressing visual texts, the dominant ideographs in films can be identified as demonstrated by the analysis of *Umi no shinpei* in this study.

### **Culture and History**

Central to the discussion of *Umi no shinpei* are two works by John W. Dower. The first, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* examines the Pacific War through the lens of race war. Dower examines elements of popular culture such as songs, art, films, and slogans from both sides in order to bring to light the degree to which race and the perception of race constituted a prime rhetorical motivator for Japan and America alike. In the case of Japan, Dower delineates the world view in which the Pacific War was situated: a dichotomy that pitted the pure Self against the forces of a demonic Other (*War Without Mercy* 250). In particular, Dower emphasizes what he calls the "Momotarō paradigm," a rendering of the folk story of Momotarō's triumph over a band of *oni* into an ur-metaphor for the whole of Japanese policy in East Asia and the Pacific (252-53).

Relevant to this study is Dower's examination of *Umi no shinpei* as a highly developed iteration of the Momotarō paradigm. The film's effectiveness depends, asserts Dower, on the ready adaptability and deployability of the Momotarō paradigm and the fact that, in *Umi no shinpei* in particular, "Shōchiku and the Imperial Navy drew together here many of the assumptions concerning themselves and the enemy that had emerged as central as the war unfolded" (254-55). While Dower's is not the only Western analysis of the film, it is among the first written in English and constitutes the foundation on which nearly all further English-language analysis is based.

This study considers Dower's paradigm as evidence of a recurring narrative pattern symptomatic of the presence of a network of high-context ideographs. It examines relevant elements of the Momotarō paradigm, extracts those which demonstrate connectivity to other texts and elements of Japanese society, and contends that through a complex genealogy of symbols, both textual and visual, the depiction of the Momotarō narrative in *Umi no shinpei* links a wide assortment of concepts including but not limited to folklore, national founding myths, popular fiction, and current events in order to suggest the unquestionable rectitude and destined victory of the Japanese war effort.

The second work by Dower utilized in this study, "Japanese Cinema Goes to War," examines the nature of Japanese Pacific War cinema, focusing especially on the depiction of Japanese heroes and their enemies. Heroes in Japanese war film, according to Dower, possess a guileless inner purity bound directly to their Japanese identity which enables them to complete their missions (*War & Peace* 35-36). Of the enemy, Dower notes five distinct types of foe with which the Japanese hero must contend: the physical enemy, often depersonalized and sometimes wholly absent from the screen; the foreign antagonist who may be convinced to join Japan's side; the ideological or cultural enemy in the form of Anglo-American or other Western values; the so-called "enemy within," the impulse to forsake duty and follow one's own desires; and the specter of war itself as a bringer of impurity and misfortune (41-42).

For the most part, these categories constitute an identity which may be represented or performed by characters who demonstrate certain characteristics. In the case of *Umi no shinpei*, heroes and villains, both of which conform closely to Dower's analysis of their respective roles and natures in Japanese war film, additionally take on an

element of the ideographic, as the story itself is a retelling of the Momotarō narrative, which, as Dower's earlier work demonstrates, is itself a distillation of a complex ideological framework. By applying Dower's hero and enemy categories to the folklore and myth on which *Umi no shinpei* draws, this study demonstrates both the intertextuality of the film and the ease with which complex ideological constructs are deployed in the repetition of narrative patterns and roles.

The significance of the struggles represented in the films discussed by Dower is examined in depth by Peter B. High in *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years' War, 1931-1945*. In particular, High's discussion of the rise of the so-called spiritist film, which "bannered 'the utter uniqueness of the Japanese spirit' and held warfare to be the proving ground of that spirit" provides vital context for understanding the development of key characters in *Umi no shinpei* (222). Like Dower, High locates the focus of later Pacific War film in the struggles of its protagonists concerning their identity as Japanese; the conflict here arises out of the premise that true Japaneseness is not a mere consequence of nativity. It must be developed and actualized through a spiritual voyage or experience (223).

This transcendent experience is something "toward which one groped while fending off the torments and lures of the flesh"—selfish thinking, individualism, and Western affectation in general being but a few of the corrupting sirens said to lie in wait (390). For the hero who attained to that coveted state of transcendence, ultimate expression of identity was the fusion of the self with the group. This act of extinguishing the self through unity typifies the spiritist film and often takes the form of the protagonist's physical death. Spiritually, however, he remains fused to the whole even

though his body is destroyed, and he attains the ultimate state of union with the nation: enshrinement at Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo (408). In this capacity, the film hero not only performed Japaneseness; in many ways he was able to *become* Japaneseness itself.

Within the context of this study, the hero's endeavor to actualize himself as Japanese is of special concern. As we shall see, at least two and possibly three of Momotarō's animal companions undergo a spiritist transformation in the film, and though none of them die in order to achieve this goal, their path to transcendence is remarkably similar to the route mapped by High and Dower in their analysis of films intended for adult consumption. To that end, High's spiritist hero framework is applied to the progress of the heroes of *Umi no shinpei* toward their ultimate destiny.

Further exploration of the matter of the Momotarō narrative as prototypical of the Pacific War conflict between Japan and the West is provided by Klaus Antoni's "Momotarō (The Peach Boy) and the Spirit of Japan: Concerning the Function of a Fairy Tale in Japanese Nationalism of the Early Shōwa Age," which expands upon the work of Dower and others by contextualizing the deployment of Momotarō in relation to pre-1945 Shōwa period state ideology. Most notably, Antoni discusses at length the historical origins of Onigashima, the "island of *oni*" that figures so largely in the narrative, suggesting that *oni*-inhabited spaces occur universally at the outer edge of Japanese space and are only considered Japanese once they have been subjugated by the conquering culture hero, of which Momotarō is a juvenile archetype (178).

Additionally, Antoni examines the influence and contents of the fourth edition of *Shōgaku kokugo tokuhon* [小学国語読本; *Elementary School National Language Textbook Readers*], the government-sanctioned textbook readers utilized in Japanese



primary schools from 1933 to 1938 (160). This twelve-volume series, in which the story of Momotarō features prominently, also includes a steady progression of folktales, myths, and other narratives which introduce and link settings, key figures, and narrative patterns from antiquity to elements of state ideology. Both the analysis of *oni*-inhabited spaces and the contents of early Shōwa textbook readers provide invaluable context in the analysis of ideograph as it influences the performance of identity in *Umi no shinpei*. Both demonstrate the continuity of images and associated ideological concepts through time, and evidence that such things were actively employed in textbooks indicates a deliberate effort on the part of the state to legitimize ideology and policy by forming a symbolic link with patterns in myths and folktales taken to be indicative of the values and character of the Japanese nation and people.

### **Myth and Ideology**

Any analysis of a film as deeply rooted in folklore, myth, and ideology as *Umi no shinpei* would be lacking if it did not include substantive discussion of the sources of those elements. This is especially true in the case of this study, which takes as its focus the effects of those elements, deployed as ideographs, on the conception and performance of identity in the film. To that end, several primary sources are examined here. Some, where noted, are examined in the original Japanese, while others are examined in the form of definitive English translations.

As the key element linking people, faith, and policy, the national founding myths of Japan are particularly significant to this study. The oldest of these and, indeed, the oldest extant text in Japanese, is *Kokiji* [古事記; *Record of Ancient Matters*], composed in 712 CE. *Kojiki* chronicles of the history of the land from the creation of the universe to

the reign of Empress Suiko (593-628 CE) and takes as its focus the legitimization of the Imperial lineage and its divine origins in the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami. I examine elements of the founding myth as they occur in the English translation of *Kojiki* by Donald L. Philippi and compare this to similar narratives in other documents for the purpose of identifying the defining features by which such narratives are deployed as visual and textual ideographs.

*Nihon shoki* [日本書紀; *Chronicles of Japan*], completed in 720 CE, similarly details the origins of the world, the establishment of the Japanese state, and the legitimacy of the Imperial line. Rather unlike *Kojiki*, however, *Nihon shoki* borrows significantly from the style and content of contemporary Chinese chronicles. However, basic elements remain the same, and in this regard both texts express the same basic assumptions about the land, its origins, and its rulers. This study examines the translation by W. G. Aston.

Additionally, two derivative histories, the ninth-century *Kogoshūi* [古語拾遺; *Gleanings from Ancient Stories*] and *Jinnō shōtōki* [神皇正統記; *Records of the Legitimate Succession of the Divine Sovereigns*], a fourteenth-century history written by Kitabatake Chikafusa, are addressed, as they provide documentation of the persistence of certain elements of the founding myths and national histories of Japan across time. This persistence reveals those points of the narratives that carried the weight of traditional acceptance and stood the greatest chance of deployment in later centuries. This study employs the expanded third edition of Katō Genchi and Hoshino Hikoshirō's translation of *Kogoshūi* and H. Paul Varley's translation of *Jinnō shōtōki*.

As an exploration of the ideological distillation of these narratives over time, this

study also examines elements of Motoori Norinaga's eighteenth century *Kojiki-den* [古事記伝; *Commentary on Kojiki*], a nativist text that discusses the founding myths, the divinity of the Imperial line, and the rejection of foreign affect in favor of native modes of expression. The elements of myth in which Motoori situates his argument suggest the significance and persistence of those elements through time and draw the genealogy of the founding myths into closer temporal proximity with the Imperial Japanese state. This study employs Ann Wehmeyer's translation of the first volume of *Kojiki-den*.

Finally, this study examines some elements of two Pacific War publications that serve to demonstrate those portions of the national founding myths that emerged as canonical elements of the state ideology during the early Shōwa period. The 1937 treatise *Kokutai no hongi* [国体の本義; *Cardinal Principles of the National Entity*], published by the Ministry of Education, set down in writing the orthodox interpretation of myth, folklore, and history utilized by the state to justify its policies and agendas. As might be anticipated, ideographs from earlier texts recur here and carry with them the weight and significance of their ability to persist through time. *Kokutai no hongi* is especially significant in that it delineates the precise nature of the state's orthodox interpretation of myth and history; films such as *Umi no shinpei* can readily be checked against this and other related texts to judge overall conformity to mandated norms. This study employs the translation of *Kokutai no hongi* by John Owen Gauntlett and Robert King Hall.

In addition to *Kokutai no hongi*, this study also examines the twelve volume fourth edition of *Shōgaku kokugo tokuhon* [hereafter *SKT*], the textbook readers examined by Antoni. These texts, published by the Ministry of Education, are instructional materials to which nearly every Japanese child of the early Shōwa period

would have been exposed. *SKT* therefore constitutes a common body of literature and point of reference for the youth of Japan and consequently for the audience of *Umi no shinpei*. Much of the national ideology delineated in *Kokutai no hongī* is reflected in the visual and textual composition of the textbooks, and the organization of materials in the textbooks leads to an organic fusion of folklore, myth, history, and contemporary national policy for young readers. *SKT* is therefore especially relevant in that it constitutes the vehicle through which state ideology is transmitted to *Umi no shinpei*'s juvenile audience. In this study, I utilize the 1970 Akimoto Shobō reprint of the original Japanese texts.

## **Conclusion**

This group of texts provides insight into the theoretical and contextual foundations of my analysis of *Umi no shinpei* and the ideographic networks which drive the performance of identity. Employing the theories and data in these texts, I will identify the effect on the formation of identity of dominant ideographs at work in *Umi no shinpei*. In order to do so, I will examine the narrative patterns and persistent symbols present in the film in light of their historical and cultural contexts by comparing the film itself to narratives present in relevant texts, films, historical events, and delineations of orthodox state ideology. This will enable me to determine where such elements intersect with *Umi no shinpei*. In so doing, I will in turn be able to locate the primary ideographs present in the film, ascertain the ways in which they subordinate other ideographs, and determine the impact of the film's message on perceptions and performance of identity.

## CHAPTER II

### ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Before any detailed analysis of *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei* can be attempted, we must firmly ground our perspective in the ideographs responsible for the film's persuasive efficacy. In approaching this topic, it is likewise important to bear in mind that the purpose of *Umi no shinpei* as a work of propaganda was ultimately to reinforce the Japanese sociopolitical order as it stood in 1945, to excite the viewing public with martial and patriotic fervor in the face of a likely American invasion of the Japanese home islands, to reinforce the authority of the military and government, and to stress to the audience the morality and necessity of Japan's military campaign to expel the Western powers from their territorial holdings in East Asia and the Pacific.

While this study aims neither to condemn nor justify Japan's foreign policy during the early Shōwa period, it operates under the following assumptions: first, that the Japanese state believed in the necessity of its endeavors; second, that it understood the value inherent in persuading the Japanese people of this position; and third, that it made regular efforts to that end through the mobilization of the media. Funded by the Imperial Japanese Navy, *Umi no shinpei* is arguably a work in this vein, for it evinces heavy investment in ideographs utilized by the state to shape public conceptions of identity and to link that identity to obedience to national policy goals. Specifically, this chapter analyzes two key components of the Japanese identity vital to understanding *Umi no*

*Shinpei* and its deeper contexts. First, it examines linguistic constraints on Japaneseness, focusing on the nature of the Japanese language and its classification as *kokugo*, the "national language." Then it examines the nature of mythohistorical narratives of the founding of Japan and the ways in which these define the boundaries of Japaneseness.

### Language as Nation

Japanese is a language of uncertain genetic affiliation typified by agglutinative structure, subject-object-verb sentence order, and CV syllable structure (Shibatani 91; 94). It retains the use of both mora and syllables and typically employs three written scripts: *kanji* [漢字], literally "Han characters" borrowed from written Chinese and used ideographically, *katakana* [カタカナ], a *kanji*-based angular script derived in Japan as an alternative to the archaic use of *kanji* for phonetic expression, and *hiragana* [ひらがな], a curved script likewise derived from *kanji* (91; 126). The language additionally makes limited use of *rōmaji* [ローマ字], or "Roman characters," in specific cases.

Due in part to its dependence on ideographic script, Japanese is a nuanced language replete with puns, alternate interpretations of identically written phrases depending on context, and deep symbolic meaning embedded in written expression. This tendency is amplified in the concept of *kotodama* [言霊; "word-soul"] which presumes the presence of a fundamental, mysterious power capable of altering reality inherent only in words of the Japanese language (Miller 271). That the phrase *kotodama no sakiwau kuni* [言霊の幸ふ国; "land where *kotodama* flourishes"] is a poetic name for Japan may suggest the degree to which such concepts affect perceptions of the language by its speakers (260). All in all, when taken together, these elements create an environment in which interconnected systems of symbols and intertextual allusions are the norm.

This trend bears out in John Hinds' analysis of the language. According to Hinds, Japanese is situation-focused: "For Japanese speakers," he observes, "it appears to be enough simply to state that a situation has occurred" as opposed to speakers of English, for whom "not only the situation but also the persons involved in the situation" are crucial to understanding a text (142). This tendency extends to grammar as well, as all parts of speech in a Japanese sentence except the verb may be omitted if that material can be reasonably intuited by the audience (142). Thus, Japanese is by its nature a language of inference and context, and "it is the responsibility of the listener (or reader) to understand what it is that the speaker or author had intended to say" (Hinds 144). The Japanese reader is therefore responsible for inserting missing information and intuiting implied meaning. Hinds attributes this method of writing to the general perception among Japanese that theirs is a homogenous society where certain information is shared by all parties (144). In this context, it is unnecessary to repeat shared knowledge, as the reader is capable of supplying it on his own.

This being the case, the constraints the language places on any articulation of ideology become evident. No matter how little a visual presentation may rely on spoken or written text, the high-context, reader-responsible and situation-dependent nature of the Japanese language will dictate the manner in which all information is received by native speakers. Thus, Japanese audiences can be generally presumed not only to presuppose the possibility of systems of interconnected symbols in texts, but rather to anticipate and actively seek them.

Worth noting, therefore, is the fact that the government textbook readers typically refer to Japanese not as *nihongo*, the Japanese language, but as *kokugo*, the national

language (Monbushō). This usage is significant as much for what it states as for what it omits. If, as Hinds suggests, the audience of any communication in the Japanese language is responsible for discerning the message's entire meaning based on shared group knowledge, it is natural to extend this convention to the words used to describe the Japanese language itself.

To refer to Japanese as *kokugo* inseparably binds the language to the speaker's identity as a subject of the Empire of Japan. Thus, to speak *kokugo* is not merely to display a trait characteristic of one's nation, but to perform nationality itself. Indeed, we need only turn to the *kokugo* textbooks themselves for confirmation of this thinking. In Volume 9 of *SKT*, a selection titled "*Kokugo no chikara*" [国語の力; "The Power of the National Language"] extols the virtues of *kokugo* and notes the propensity of Japanese expatriates in America and Brazil to construct Japanese-language schools in which to educate their children. "This," says the text, "is because Japanese people [*nihonjin*] must be educated in the Japanese language [*nihongo*]" (168-69). The final lines of the selection command the reader to protect *kokugo* and keep it dear, for "the citizen who forgets *kokugo*, it is said, is not a citizen at all. Revere *kokugo*. Love *kokugo*. *Kokugo* is the dwelling-place of the soul of the citizen" (170-71).

### **Gods and Men**

The ideographs that underpin the Japanese identity reflect and reinforce an epistemology arranged according to concepts of pure inner and corrupt outer worlds. In addition to the linguistic constraints on Japaneseness discussed above, the body of Shintō myth surrounding the Japanese founding narrative is a dominant source of this perspective. According to these texts, among which the oldest extant examples are *Kojiki*



and *Nihon shoki*, Japan was created by a wedded pair of creator deities, Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto. The islands were then populated by a host of other, lesser divinities, and heaven and earth were ruled by the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami, who dispatched her grandson, Ninigi no Mikoto to descend from Takamagahara, the "High Plain of Heaven," to govern the mortal world (Aston 18, 77; Philippi 49-60, 69-71, 137). According to the traditional chronology, Ninigi no Mikoto's great-grandson Kamuyamato Iwarebiko completed this task and founded the Empire of Japan on the first day of the first month of spring in the year of *kanoto tori* [660 BCE] (Aston 132). He is best known by the posthumous appellation Jinmu, meaning "Divine Warrior," and is traditionally considered Japan's first Tennō, or Emperor.

Realistically, little is known about Jinmu, including whether or not he actually existed. There is a paucity of archaeological evidence concerning the period in question, and scholars have revealed points of inconsistency in the official Japanese chronologies, the earliest of which dates to 712 CE (Philippi 3). Among these texts, *Nihon shoki* especially appears to have been written in imitation of Chinese records of the time and includes problematic elements including but not limited to the extension of reign dates and the possible fabrication of fictional sovereigns in order to situate the founding of the nation in the astrologically significant *kanoto tori* year, which is traditionally considered a time of considerable social change (Aston xvii-xviii; Hiraizumi 16; Philippi 17). To a Western observer such as myself, this would at first seem to make the story of Jinmu Tennō and the details of the national founding narrative poor anchors for national identity. However, prevailing modes of thought at the time did not necessarily privilege factual authenticity over ideological or emotional value.

It is informative in this case to consult the perspective of Hiraizumi Kiyoshi, a noted scholar of the early Shōwa period and an outspoken nationalist active both before and after the Pacific War. Hiraizumi's perspective is not presented here as an objective analysis of the Jinmu conundrum. Rather, it is addressed precisely because of its strict adherence to early Shōwa ideology, providing insight into the thinking of the times. To begin, Hiraizumi dismisses the inconsistencies in *Nihon shoki*'s chronology as an unfortunate consequence of Sinophilia: "This chronological confusion existed in ancient Japanese history because the Japanese adopted mistaken principles of historical events from a foreign country [China]" (14). His attribution of the source of the error to foreign thinking is in line with much of nationalist philosophy and echoes the thinking of eighteenth-century nativist scholar Motoori Norinaga, an enthusiastic critic of such Chinese influence. Motoori, like later scholars such as Hiraizumi, considered Japan inherently superior to foreign lands for largely theological reasons:

The Imperial Country [Japan] is the land of the birth of the awesome goddess Ama-terasu-ō-mi-kami, ancestor of the gods (*kamu mi-oya*). Of the reasons why Japan is superior to all countries, this is the most salient. There is no country that does not receive the blessings of this august deity. (213)

Motoori himself echoes the sentiments of Kitabatake Chikafusa, who prefaced the fourteenth century *Jinnō shōtōki* in a similar fashion:

Great Japan is the divine land. The heavenly progenitor founded it, and the sun goddess bequeathed it to her descendants to rule eternally. Only in our country is this true; there are no similar examples in other countries. This is why our country is called the divine land. (49)

Thus, as the point of origin of Amaterasu Ōmikami and, as we shall see, the polity chosen by this supreme deity to enact her will on earth, Japan is the primal wellspring of virtue and purity. However, Motoori observes, following the introduction of Chinese customs to

Japan, the people adopted foreign mannerisms, and "the hearts and conduct of the people, which had been straight and pure, became dirty and crooked" (221). This sickness, according to Motoori, crept into even *Nihon shoki*, leading to a conundrum: "since people do not realize that the *Nihon shoki* is full of embellishments and do not fully understand the circumstances of its compilation, it is difficult to dispel the deep illness of the Chinese spirit" (33). Motoori's objection lies in the corruption of the founding narrative and the confusion sown among the people. While his solution is to study and encourage interest in the ostensibly less corrupt *Kojiki*, Hiraizumi's thinking reflects an approach more conducive to the efficient mobilization of the rich symbolism of *Nihon shoki*'s version of the founding narrative.

Concerning Jinmu, Hiraizumi asserts that the story of the founding need not be factually accurate to be culturally and emotionally true. Although, as noted above, he criticizes the foreign influence present in the text, Hiraizumi argues that if the chronology's alignment to the calendar is corrupt, it nevertheless remains trustworthy in that it preserves principles and events even if the calendar has been forced to conform to Chinese conventions (16). Moreover, Hiraizumi reasons that "perspectives of this world and of life, of intelligence, and the moral character of a people can be understood through their myths. In this sense, myth is a precious historical source" (19). Thus, he argues that the mythohistorical founding narrative, though it lacks legitimacy in the Western sense, remains a valuable source of tradition and guidance.

By this logic, anything can be taken as emotional truth that can be utilized to stir emotions in the approved manner, and emotional truth, much like faith, requires no proof to retain its power. In fact, to challenge its authority on factual grounds demonstrates the

challenger's ignorance of the nature of the emotional truth and solidifies the challenger's position as an outsider incapable of understanding the Japanese view. Thus, identification with the group is contingent, in some ways, on not challenging the accepted order, even when the order lacks factual accuracy or historical veracity.

The importance in keeping faith with the orthodox narrative of Jinmu as Imperial founder lies in the link his story creates between the divinities of Shintō mythology and the human inhabitants of Japan and the means by which that link is established and maintained. The *Tenson kōrin* [天孫降臨; Descent of the Heavenly Grandchild] narrative legitimates that link. According to *Kojiki*, Ninigi no Mikoto is commanded to descend to earth by his grandmother Amaterasu Ōmikami, deity of the sun and ruler of the heavenly gods who inhabit Takamagahara. According to *Kojiki*, Amaterasu Ōmikami makes the following declaration:

"TÖYÖ-ASI-PARA-NÖ-MIDU-PO-NÖ-KUNI [豊葦原水穂国; *Toyoashihara no mizuho no kuni*; Land of the Plentiful Reed Plains and Fresh Rice Ears] has been entrusted to you as the land you are to rule. In accordance with the command, descend from the heavens!" (Philippi 137-38)

*Nihon shoki* records the command thus:

"This Reed-plain-1500-autumns-fair-rice-ear Land [Japan] is the region which my descendants shall be lords of. Do thou, my August Grandchild, proceed thither and govern it. Go! and may prosperity attend thy dynasty and may it, like Heaven and Earth, endure for ever." (Aston 77)

Nearly a century later, *Kogoshūi* echoes both texts, observing that once the way had been cleared for the descent of Ninigi no Mikoto,

Then the Divine Ancestress Amaterasu-Ō-Mikami and Takami-Musubi-no-Mikoto issued an Imperial Edict, saying: "The Luxuriant Land of Reed Plains is a country which are descendants are to inherit. Go, therefore, our Imperial Grandson, and rule over it! and may our Imperial lineage continue unbroken and prosperous, co-eternal with Heaven and Earth!" (Katō and Hoshino 26)

*Jinnō shōtōki* adheres to the orthodox narrative as well, though it was composed some five centuries after *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*:

Before bestowing the imperial regalia upon Ninigi, Amaterasu addressed him with these words: "Ashihara-no-Chiho-no-Aki-no-Mizuho-no-kuni is a land that shall be ruled by my descendants. Go there and rule. Go, and may your line prosper eternally, like heaven and earth." (Kitabatake 76)

The texts differ in certain details, but the core of the narrative remains the same across sources as well as centuries. Amaterasu Ōmikami sends her grandson forth to extend influence of the divine into the mortal world, declaring that it has been given to him and his descendants to rule *tenjō mukyū* [天壤無窮] 'coeval with Heaven and Earth.'

Thereafter, Amaterasu Ōmikami gives Ninigi no Mikoto three powerful relics: the Yata Mirror, the Yasakani Curved Jewels, and the Kusanagi Sword, which together comprised the *Mikusa no kandakara* or "Three Sacred Treasures" which embody the divine authority of Amaterasu Ōmikami and "are the visible sign and seal of the right to rule over the Japanese nation" (Holtom 2, 5). As they constitute a reification of the concept of unbroken Imperial rule from mythical time to the present, their physical existence is a major pillar of the ideological framework supporting the Imperial institution, and it is well worth noting that the *Mikusa no kandakara* have figured significantly in Imperial ritual as recently as 1989 (Naumann 158).

The significance of the divine mandate embodied in the treasures is evident in the narrative of the ensuing pacification of the earth. Even before his descent is completed, Ninigi no Mikoto and his retinue confront a host of earthly gods with whom they must contend. In some instances these gods acknowledge the divine mandate, as in the case of Sarutahiko no Ōkami. This deity of the crossroads is encountered by Ninigi no Mikoto's scouts who, taken aback by his fierce appearance, return and report thus:

"There is a strange god at the Eight-Forked Cross-Ways of Heaven, whose nose measures seven hand-spans long and whose back some seven feet long, and whose mouth and posteriors brightly shine and whose fiery eyeballs resemble a luminous eight-hand-span or large mirror." (Katō and Hoshino 28)

However, upon further investigation of this fearsome deity by Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, the "Heavenly Lady of Dauntless Spirit," it is discovered that Sarutahiko no Ōkami has come not to threaten Ninigi no Mikoto, but to serve as his herald (28-29). However, those "diabolic foes" who resist the bearers of the divine mandate are met with military force and destroyed (27-31). In all cases, though, Ninigi no Mikoto and his retinue are equally engaged in the act of purifying and pacifying the land.

As Ninigi no Mikoto is unable to complete his mission during his lifetime, the divine mandate is inherited by his descendants and eventually falls to Jinmu Tennō, who fulfills the command of his heavenly ancestress. Jinmu Tennō's pacification of the land purifies it of rebellious elements that have lost touch with their proper place. Once again, following Hiraizumi's thinking, the story needs not be factually true to have emotional truth. It establishes the notion of purification through sociocultural assimilation as the dominant means of restoring the world to its proper condition. As an act of purification conducted under divine auspices, the story supports the application of this pattern to future instances of territorial expansion.

Moreover, Jinmu as the first Tennō establishes a lineage that links the authority of Amaterasu Ōmikami and the people of Japan. As long as this link remains unbroken through time, the divine destiny of the Japanese people is likewise immortal, persisting into modern times and guiding policy. Thus, Jinmu Tennō and, to a lesser extent, Ninigi no Mikoto function ideographically, for while on one level they are simply figures in a mythohistoric drama that accounts for the founding of the Japanese nation and the right

of its Imperial family to rule, these two semidivine conquerors bind up in themselves the essence of perfected Japaneseness. As direct descendents of the supreme deity Amaterasu Ōmikami, Ninigi no Mikoto and Jinmu Tennō represent a link between divine and mortal, past and present, eternal and transient. To invoke either is to simultaneously invoke the gods and the state as well as the divine mandate directing the course of state affairs.

Physical representations of this relationship such as the *Mikusa no kandakara* or various locations throughout Japan where key events of the narratives are said to have occurred serve to invoke this network as well. For instance, Hiraizumi, in explaining an eighteenth-century poem wherein the poet laments the ruined state of Jinmu Tennō's grave, finds occasion to turn the discussion toward the nation and its people:

If you go back two thousand years, your ancestors will be numerous. And this is not just limited to you; your friends are the same. Therefore while the Japanese people lived in this island country for some thousand years, they all became related, by blood. The center of this blood-related clan is the imperial house. The founder of this imperial house is Emperor Jinmu, who accomplished the great feat of beginning the nation. It was this fact that Shibano Ritsuzan [the poet mentioned above] lamented, that the debt we owe Emperor Jinmu was forgotten, and that his grave site was in decline. We must say that Shibano Ritsuzan had indeed perceived history correctly and, further, had a sympathetic, sincere heart. (2)

The grave as a physical symbol allows the invocation of Jinmu Tennō as historical fact; Jinmu himself as national founder and first Tennō carries the authority and legitimacy of Amaterasu Ōmikami through divine ancestry by way of Ninigi no Mikoto. As symbolic forefather of the Japanese people, Jinmu Tennō represents the special status of his people as children of the gods, a debt that must be answered, says Hiraizumi, with intense feelings of gratitude. This sense of unity and gratitude, then, and not confirmation of the factual details as to whether or not Jinmu Tennō existed or is really buried in his tomb, is the ideologically proper product of historical inquiry.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, Japaneseness in the context of this study is on many levels constrained by the performance of unifying acts that include but are not limited to speaking the language and cleaving to particular interpretations of the national founding myths. In order to perform Japaneseness, one must first speak the language, in which are inherent a good many of the assumptions and values of the culture. Additionally, one must, as Hiraizumi says, "perceive history correctly," or attend to the emotional content of culture and history rather than its factual minutiae. Outside influences of any kind that might interfere with this process are, by virtue of their incompatibility with the founding narrative, foreign and corrupt. To be Japanese in this case, then, is also to guard against and dispel foreign intrusion in order to maintain the original purity of the system established by Jinmu Tennō in accordance with the decree of Amaterasu Ōmikami.

As we can see, language, culture, government, and belief are inextricably bound through the founding myth, critical elements of which persist through time unchanged. These key images, terms, and events come to function ideographically, encompassing the essence of ideal Japaneseness through the establishment of both boundaries limiting that identity and avenues through which it is expanded. The latter, of significant interest to the early Shōwa state, constitutes a critical point upon which the ideological message of *Umi no shinpei* depends.



## CHAPTER III

### THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD

Of interest to any investigation of the ideology at the core of *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei* is the re-imagining of the divine mandate granted in the *Tenson kōrin* narrative as encompassing the entire earth. Prior to this shift, ideological focus centered on the unbroken continuity of the Imperial line that existed coeval with heaven and earth (*tenjō mukyū*). This phrase was itself so iconic in nature as to be an ideograph in its own right, binding to it all preconceptions, mythic and historical, about the sanctity of the Imperial throne and the right of the descendants of Ninigi no Mikoto to rule the empire in perpetuity (W. Edwards 301). However, with the approach of the symbolically significant Imperial Year 2600 (1940; figured from 660 BCE), which found the Empire embroiled in its fourth year of hard fighting in China, official focus began to change from Ninigi no Mikoto's descent to Jinmu Tennō's conquests (306). As a result, official state notions of Japaneseness came to reflect this trend toward global thinking.

This chapter examines the means by which the state militarized the narratives of the nation's founding and subordinated the visual and ideological aesthetic of the samurai class in order to appropriate the ideological potential of samurai models of loyalty and duty. Specific points include the refiguring of Jinmu Tennō's original mission as an ever-expanding global mandate symbolized by the phrase *hakkō ichiu*, the mythic narrative of

the warrior-prince Yamato Takeru no Mikoto as type specimen for this interpretation of the narrative, and the reconceptualization of Japan's military and the values inherited by the military from the samurai as artifacts of an earlier age typified by direct Imperial rule.

### **Under One Roof**

At the heart of the transition from insular to global conceptualizations of Japaneseness was the slogan *hakkō ichiu*, commonly rendered in English as "all the world under one roof" (W. Edwards 291). The term derives from a statement attributed to Jinmu Tennō just prior to his ascending the Imperial throne: upon surveying the land of Kashiwabara in the Yamato region, he expressed his desire "to establish a capital from which to unite the whole realm, placing the whole world under one roof" (*Kokutai no hongī* 108). *Hakkō ichiu* first surfaced as a slogan at the end of the 1910s and was originally employed as a call for global unification under Japanese moral and spiritual leadership based upon the principle of the uniqueness and inherent superiority of the Imperial institution (W. Edwards 304). However, over time *hakkō ichiu* came to suggest a more martial attitude and "by the 1930s the term had become established as a code word justifying resort to military means in the extension of Japanese interests" (305).

Thus, *hakkō ichiu*, upon its ascent as the dominant ideograph utilized to express national identity and purpose, was capable of establishing through association that the expansion of Japanese territory in contemporary events was not only in alignment with past precedent as expressed in the eastward campaign of Jinmu Tennō and the later efforts of his descendant Yamato Takeru no Mikoto, but was also sanctioned by the same divine source. Thus, the *tenjō mukyū* mandate can be inferred to have persisted into the present because the Imperial Throne persisted, maintaining the state of affairs established by

Jinmu Tennō, who gave voice to the purpose of the mandate in *hakkō ichiu*.

As the manifestation of the *tenjō mukyū* mandate, *hakkō ichiu* attains special significance as a pure distillate of national mission and, thus, unquestionable policy. The 1937 publication *Kokutai no hongī* [国体の本義; *Cardinal Principles of the National Entity*], issued by the Ministry of Education in order to "clarify our national entity and to cultivate and awaken national sentiment and consciousness" elaborates upon the significance of this position (*Kokutai no hongī* 50):

This proclamation [made by Jinmu Tennō] did disperse evil, lay down the Way, and set forth our country's resplendent way of progress which increasingly grows wider. Thus it is verily the great policy of the successive Emperors who without a break succeed each other. Hence, the Emperor is a deity incarnate who rules our country in unison with the august Will of the Imperial Ancestors. We do not mean, when respectfully referring to him as a deity incarnate—marvelous deity—or humanly manifested deity, the so-called absolute God or omniscient and omnipotent God, but signify that the Imperial Ancestors have manifested themselves in the person of the Emperor, who is their divine offspring, that the Emperor in turn is one in essence with the Imperial Ancestors, that he is forever the fountainhead for the growth and development of his subjects and the country, and that he is endlessly a superbly august person. (70-71)

It is thus clear that the reigning Tennō is to be considered an extension and manifestation of his ancestors, both earthly and divine. As a result, Jinmu Tennō's mission to expand his control over primal Japan in accordance with the will of Amaterasu Ōmikami is now to be applied, by extension, to current events, which are just the newest chapter in an unbroken chain of efforts to dispel corrupt foreign elements and expand the Imperial domain until it encompasses the world.

Such a re-imagining of the founding narrative and bonding of the ideographs in that narrative to the present day suggests a founding myth that is ongoing. Just as Jinmu Tennō continued Ninigi no Mikoto's legacy and completed his great-grandfather's task, *Kokutai no hongī* suggests that the Empire is, in turn, completing Jinmu Tennō's task.

Participants in that mission are children of a destiny decreed in heaven, active players in the myth as it unfolds. Ultimately, though, they are not required to survive to see it actualized, but simply expected to expend their lives in its continuation, setting the stage for the next generation of Imperial subjects to do the same. In the mythohistories, perhaps the most iconic example of this process is the story of the legendary warrior-prince Yamato Takeru no Mikoto.

### **Continuing the Sacred Mission**

The warrior known to history as Yamato Takeru no Mikoto begins life as Prince Ousu, youngest of twin sons born to Keikō Tennō, the twelfth Imperial sovereign, who is said to have ruled Japan from 71-130 CE (Aston 188; 213). Fearless from birth, Ousu first distinguishes himself by slaying his disobedient and deceptive elder twin brother, Ōusu (Philippi 231-32). Thereafter, Keikō Tennō dispatches Ousu to the western frontier to subdue the Kumaso, an "unsubmissive and disrespectful" tribe led by two brothers known collectively as Kumaso Takeru, the "braves of the Kumaso" (234-35). Assisted by gifts given by his aunt Yamato Hime no Mikoto, the chief priestess of Ise Shrine, Ousu disguises himself as a maiden and, infiltrating the enemy's fortress, slays the brothers Kumaso Takeru, the younger of whom grants him the name Yamato Takeru no Mikoto before expiring (234-35). *Kojiki* notes that on his return journey to Keikō Tennō's court, Yamato Takeru no Mikoto additionally "subdued and pacified all of the mountain deities, river deities, and deities of the sea-straits" (235).

From this it becomes clear that Yamato Takeru no Mikoto's duty is not only to subdue unruly tribes, but to subjugate their deities as well. In this regard, he performs the same manner of tasks as Ninigi no Mikoto and Jinmu Tennō. That Yamato Takeru no

Mikoto's aunt bestows magical gifts on him is also significant, as she is the chief priestess of Ise Shrine, the cult center of Amaterasu Ōmikami still considered the most prestigious of Japan's many Shintō shrines today (Shintō bunka kenkyūkai 64, 149). Acting in Amaterasu Ōmikami's stead, Yamato Hime no Mikoto equips her nephew for his journey with objects that enable him to achieve victory.

Upon returning to the palace, Yamato Takeru no Mikoto is immediately dispatched to subdue a progression of unruly tribes and personages. On his way to pacify the tribes of the eastern frontier, he again visits his aunt, who gives him the Kusanagi Sword, one of the *Mikusa no kandakara* discussed previously (238-39). The prince's exploits continue for some time until, having left the sacred sword in the possession of his wife, he runs afoul of the deity of Mount Ibuki, a giant white boar whose displeasure leads to the young warrior's demise (246-49).

Even though Yamato Takeru no Mikoto dies leaving the pacification of the land unfinished, he is responsible for opening up significant portions of the country to Imperial rule and subjugating rebellious souls, both mortal and divine. In all this, he is assisted through the proxy of his aunt by Amaterasu Ōmikami, only failing once he leaves her divine protection behind. Yet even then Yamato Takeru no Mikoto is not a failure, for his son eventually becomes Chūai Tennō, the fourteenth sovereign of Japan's Imperial line (Aston 217). This connection to the Imperial succession situates Yamato Takeru no Mikoto's actions within the framework of the *tenjō mukyū* mandate and its reification through *hakkō ichiu*. In this way, his story is subordinated to and invokes the Jinmu Tennō narrative, establishing a precedent of an ever-unfolding divine mission.

## The Way of the Warrior-Subject

The military nature of the founding narratives discussed above plays a critical role in their mobilization as instruments of policy. However, they are only useful as long as the mandate they propose to legitimate is understood to remain unbroken. This poses a significant conundrum when considered in light of Japanese history. From the close of the twelfth century until the Meiji restoration in 1868 Japan was governed primarily by members of the samurai class (Hane 76). While Imperial court in Kyoto held *de jure* authority over the realm, for the majority of a roughly 670-year period, *de facto* power was concentrated in the hands of the *Seii taishōgun* [征夷大將軍; Great Barbarian-subduing General], or shogun, formerly the generalissimo charged by the court directly with the defense of the Empire's frontier (Hane 76; Friday 40; Wakabayashi 26-29).

Both the national founding narratives and the extended period of samurai rule exerted considerable influence upon Japanese ethics and identity, but the two appear mutually incompatible at first glance. Seven centuries of disregard for Imperial authority threaten the integrity of any attempt to cast the national founding as the establishment of an eternal mandate to rule, while to dismiss the ideals of samurai who dominated Japanese affairs for so many centuries as disloyal to the principle of Imperial rule deprives the state of the storehouse of ideology and symbols generated during the period.

For instance, among the best known texts on samurai ethics is the austere *Hagakure* [葉隠; *Hidden Among the Leaves*] of Yamamoto Tsunetomo. Compiled by a disciple of Yamamoto between 1710 and 1716, the text contains anecdotes and aphorisms related to the proper conduct of one's duty as a samurai. Peculiar to Yamamoto's approach and of considerable value to crafters of early Shōwa policy is the famous admonition that

"the Way of the Samurai is found in death" (17). Yamamoto advocates a near mania for death, stressing that true loyalty to one's master is best expressed by living as though one's body is already dead, rendering the samurai ready to throw his life away in service to the master at any time (17-18). However, the focus of the text remains at all times the samurai's feudal lord and not the imperial court. Thus, despite the utility of texts such as *Hagakure* as means of inspiring loyalty and martial fervor, on their own they may be counterproductive to efforts to encourage loyalty in the Imperial institution or the mission assigned to it in antiquity. In order to overcome this obstacle, the feudal lord as the object of ultimate loyalty must be subordinated to the Tennō while demonstrating that such a shift restores an original, divinely mandated arrangement.

Two of the most influential documents utilized to direct national loyalty to the Tennō were the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors [軍人勅諭; *Gunjin chokuyu*], promulgated in 1882, and the Imperial Rescript on Education [教育ニ関スル勅語; *Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo*], promulgated in 1890. The Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors addresses the men and officers of the Imperial Japanese military and affirms the direct authority of the Tennō as their commander in chief. It additionally exhorts personnel to cleave to five guiding virtues: loyalty, propriety, courage, righteousness, and simplicity (qtd. in Tsunoda, de Bary, and Keene 706-07). Such thinking is not without parallel in the samurai literature of the preceding period, but the Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors makes patently clear that it is the Tennō and not one of his subjects who retains supreme authority—the guiding "head" which commands the "limbs," or military (705-06). This authority, moreover, though it was temporarily usurped during the feudal period, is put forth as the rightful inheritance of the Tennō as a descendant of Jinmu (705).

Through this mechanism, the warrior ethos can be reevaluated not as the proprietary virtue of a class of usurpers, but as the unifying code of loyal warrior-subjects charged with the execution of a noble martial legacy with origins in the age of myth. If this be the case, then the ideology that drives the warrior class is likewise legitimized by its alignment with the Imperial institution, while those individuals in the past who usurped its authority for their own gain can be said to have strayed from the correct path. By the declaration of the Tennō, however, past corruption is dispelled and the primal state of affairs is restored. In this way, premodern samurai imagery and symbols can be used to simultaneously invoke the *ethos* of the warrior class and the divine mandate of the Tennō.

The Rescript on Education continues this trend, binding loyalty to the Tennō in a more concrete way for all his subjects. Reverence afforded to this rescript from the time of its promulgation until 1945 required it be treated as a divine artifact, "read as sacred rituals before hushed audiences formally bowed in reverence" and "taken from a shrine for reading and returned with obeisance" at the end of the proceedings (Benedict 209). Its rhetorical impact, especially in this light, becomes apparent when the details of the text are examined.

The Rescript begins by recounting the virtues of the Imperial institution:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. (qtd. in Gluck 121)

Whereas the Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors observes that the warlords of the previous period broke with virtue and usurped Imperial power, the Rescript on Education attributes all eternal and universal virtue to the actions of the Imperial Ancestors. Thus, all virtue, from wherever it might seem to spring, comes in reality from the Tennō and his ancestors,



incurring a debt of gratitude that must be repaid through loyal service. To that end, the maintenance of human relationships, cast in Confucian terms, is proposed by the Rescript as a means of answering this profound debt:

Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. (121)

In omitting the top tier of this traditional arrangement (the relationship between ruler and subject), the Rescript implies that this relationship is fixed and beyond debate. The Tennō alone, as the source of all virtue, is uniquely fit to occupy the position of sovereign, and the loyalty of his subjects is assumed as a matter of course. The command to offer oneself up to the state in times of emergency, however, suggests the warrior ethic of the samurai who, as *Hagakure* suggests, were expected to offer their lives in service to their lords without question. This, though, is bound to the founding narrative, for the phrase "coeval with heaven and earth" (*tenjō mukyū*) invokes the *Tenson kōrin* narrative and all that follows, including Jinmu Tennō's enthronement and, ultimately, all of Japanese history down to the Rescript's promulgation and beyond. That the execution of this duty will enable subjects to "render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers" suggests as well that in aligning with the Imperial institution, the virtue of the previous age, though it is tainted with rebellion, can be purified through dutiful service in the present.

## Conclusion

In refiguring the mandate received by Ninigi no Mikoto and its reification in Jinmu Tennō's conquest of primal Japan as the first stages of an eternal, ever-unfolding

expansion of Imperial rule under divine guidance, the early Shōwa state established an ideological precedent by which its policies in East Asia and the Pacific could be understood as the continuation of a sacred mission. In type specimens for this narrative such as the conquests of Yamato Takeru no Mikoto, who contributed to the expansion of Imperial spaces but died before seeing the task completed, there additionally exists precedent for a path to participation in the national mission, which came to be understood as expanding Japanese dominion until it encompassed "all the corners of the earth."

To establish the precedent of unbroken Imperial authority from the time of the founding, the nation's feudal past had to be re-imagined as well by subordinating the loyalty traditionally expressed by samurai to their lords to the higher virtue of loyalty to the Tennō. In the approximately seven centuries of rule by the samurai, the shogunal government embodied the nation and the Imperial institution was re-imagined and subordinated to it, becoming a distant symbolic entity of little more than ceremonial concern. However, with the restoration of direct Imperial rule in 1868, the Tennō once again embodied the state and it was the samurai who were refigured.

This substitution of the Tennō for the feudal lord as the object of loyalty demonstrates the potency of the founding myth in horizontal alignment with other ideographs. As models for the organization of the state, the systems embodied in the Tennō and the samurai cannot but contradict one another. However, both are equally ingrained in the sociocultural landscape of Japan and, therefore, Japaneseness. In McGee's particularly apt terminology, the Tennō supplanted the shogunal system as "the center-sun about which every ideograph orbits" (13). The role of the samurai thus was subordinated and reframed in light of the supremacy of Tennō as national ur-symbol.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOMOTARŌ AND THE MEDIA

Having approached in previous chapters a working understanding of the importance of language, myth, and history to conceptions of Japaneseness, I have established a context for the understanding of the ideological impact of the ideographs employed in the composition of *Momotarō Umi no shinpei*. It is likewise imperative that I establish a context for the means by which this mythological and folkloric context was deployed in the entertainment and education sectors during the early twentieth century in order to be able to ascertain both the nature and the goal of *Umi no shinpei*.

To that end, this chapter explores the following elements in some detail. First, I examine various media through which the Momotarō narrative and myths of the national founding were propagated within children's media. I begin by surveying government-authored children's *kokugo* textbook readers, especially those highly illustrated volumes designed for younger readers, focusing on the prominence of the story of Momotarō within them. I additionally draw special attention to the recurrence of tropes directly related to the founding narratives, to military imagery, and to national imagery.

Thereafter, I examine narrative patterns in boys' "future war" fiction, popular stories in which the protagonists, typically adolescent males, participate in wars fought between Japan and evil foreign aggressors. These stories actively apply the ideology advanced in textbooks to a portrayal of righteous conflict from which Japan emerges triumphant.

Following this, the chapter examines certain narrative and ideological trends of Japanese spiritist films developed during the Pacific War. Of particular interest is the focus of these films on the preservation and development of the pure self in the face of external corruption. The solution to such a threat and the key to ultimate victory, according to the spiritist model, is the refinement of the spirit until a state of spiritual transcendence is achieved, allowing the individual to merge with the national mission.

### **By the Book**

Of critical importance to this study is *Shōgaku kokugo tokuhon* [小学国語読本; *Elementary National Language Textbook Reader*]. This series of twelve textbooks published by the Ministry of Education was used by students in the mandatory first six grades of the Imperial education system. The significance of this mandated exposure lies in the fact that students exposed to *SKT* constitute a population exposed to a common body of images, textual presentations, and narratives. Thus, *SKT* is instrumental in constructing a coherent discourse community among Japanese. More specifically, the manner in which *SKT* depicts national symbols, military images, folklore, and myth is particularly relevant to the understanding of *Umi no shinpei*, as it is this body of imagery which is invoked repeatedly in the film.

Of particular interest among the twelve volumes of *SKT* is the first. This 78-page text is replete with colorful illustrations, the vast majority of which can be classed according to five categories: nature images, iconic national symbols, military imagery, depictions of civic virtue, and illustrations of folktales. Many, such as images of cherry trees in bloom (2-3) and a depiction of children offering a worshipful cheer to the rising sun (6) can be construed as belonging to more than one category—in these cases nature

and national symbol and nature, national symbol, and civic virtue, respectively.

Additionally, the layout of the text in some cases construes a connection between otherwise unrelated images, such as in the case of pages 6 and 7, where the previously mentioned children, in offering a respectful gesture to the physical sun, also appear to render the same honors to the Japanese flag positioned prominently in the top left section of page 7. Such images serve to present to young children many of the symbols of the state ideology as natural and to establish intuitive connections between symbols and the deeper meanings they represent. In this way, *SKT* is instrumental in laying the foundations of the ideographic network.

Images, however, are not the limit of *SKT*'s contribution to the repertoire of visual ideographs available to the state. Klaus Antoni observes in "Momotarō (The Peach Boy) and the Spirit of Japan: Concerning the Function of a Fairy Tale in Japanese Nationalism of the Early Shōwa Age," that the story of Momotarō, as the capstone selection in the first volume of *SKT*, is a story to which nearly all Japanese children can be assumed to have been exposed—so much so that although a wide and colorful number of variations in the story have come down to the Japanese from antiquity, the *SKT* version of the Momotarō narrative became and still remains the standard version of the story (163).

In essence, the story runs thus: a poor old man and woman come into the possession of a giant peach. When they cut it open, a male child emerges, and because he is born from a peach, they name him Momotarō [桃太郎; Peach Boy]. Momotarō grows up to be a capable warrior and eventually determines to conquer a tribe of predatory *oni* who live on a distant island. Momotarō's mother and father give him millet dumplings to eat, and the boy hero sets out toward Onigashima, the "island of *oni*," to do battle. On his

way he acquires three animal companions who assist him in exchange for a share of his dumplings: a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant. Together they conquer the *oni*, who submit to Momotarō, beg his forgiveness, and return all the treasures they have stolen.

Triumphant, Momotarō and his companions return to the village (Monbushō 1:50-75).

Similarities to the *Tenson kōrin* narrative are readily apparent. Momotarō, who is of supernatural origin, is sent forth by his parents equipped with dumplings much as Ninigi no Mikoto is sent forth by Amaterasu Ōmikami armed with the *Mikusa no kandakara*. Momotarō is also similarly assisted by gifts (dumplings) in the pacification of his foes and the recruitment of allies. The *oni* are, like the foes of the Imperial heroes, rebels against established order who must be pacified. Critical to this view is a stratification of the world into good, pure inside elements conforming to a hierarchy and ill-behaved outside elements that must be pacified or destroyed. Thus, even though the story of Momotarō is a folktale outside the body of national myth, it is invested in and informed by the same epistemology as the founding narratives. Its ideological utility therefore lies in both its structural simplicity and its high degree of compatibility with the national founding myths and the constraints they place on Japaneseness.

Antoni notes that as the volumes of *SKT* progress, folktales are gradually replaced with elements of national myth (161). In Volume 5, Shintō myths detailing the conflict between Amaterasu Ōmikami and her brother the storm god are related, and the volume also includes a rendition of the *Tenson kōrin* narrative (161-62). Volume 6 completes the cycle by relating the stories of Jinmu Tennō and Yamato Takeru no Mikoto (162). Thus, students utilizing *SKT* could be expected to know and understand the major myths of the national founding approximately halfway through their mandatory education.

In later volumes, myths give way to events from history, such as the "divine wind" which swept away Mongol invaders in the thirteenth century (Volume 6), the life of General Nogi Maresuke, a famous commander of the First Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars (Volume 8), and the 1905 Battle of Tsushima, in which the Imperial Japanese Navy devastated the Imperial Russian Navy (Volume 11). Thus, by the end of the sixth grade, students would not only know folktales such as the Momotarō narrative and the national founding narratives, but major episodes in Japanese military history. All of these selections share a common pattern in that they reflect the struggle to establish and expand pure Japanese spaces or the education and preparation of famous warriors.

The pure inner/corrupt outer dichotomy emerges first and most approachably with Momotarō in primarily fantastic terms and is quickly bound to the real world through the founding narratives, which also feature the inner/outer struggle. The narratives are in some ways interchangeable in this regard, and one can easily invoke the other. With the addition of documented historical events that reflect similar thinking, the inculcation of the pure inner/corrupt outer dichotomy begun with Momotarō is transmitted to verifiable events and events within recent memory. Thus, *SKT* is not merely a means of encouraging language proficiency, but also an exercise in civic, spiritual, and ideological education as well. The language, the iconic images presented, and the implicit presence of a mandate and method by which to drive out foreignness and preserve Japaneseness are bound to one another in a network of symbolic relationships that, as we shall see, also emerge repeatedly in the realm of popular entertainment.

### **Child's Play**

Another powerful influence on Japanese youth during the early twentieth century

is children's fiction, especially as typified by the future war genre. Owen Griffiths, in "Militarizing Japan: Patriotism, Profit, and Children's Print Media, 1894-1925," explores the origins of this subset of children's print entertainment, beginning with the first emergence of the genre in the late nineteenth century and including Miyazaki Ichiu's 1922 seminal serial novel *Nichibei miraisen* [日米未来戦; *The Future War Between Japan and America*]. While the texts themselves are not a focus of this study, of particular interest is Griffiths' discussion of war as a marketable form of children's entertainment and as a means of introducing warfare to young audiences as a desirable and natural part of life. In the case of Japan, the fiction "provides an entrée into the process by war, real and vicarious, and the martial, manly values it fostered were embedded and normalized within the fabric of Japanese society" (Griffiths). Considered in concert with the cumulative effects of textbooks such as *SKT*, this trend is especially relevant when considering its successors on the screen, to include *Umi no shinpei*.

Most significant to this study is the nature of the images, plots, and patterns that drive future war fiction during the period in question, especially as they reflect or contrast with the ideology transmitted through the canon of myths and the orthodox interpretation of those narratives as they appear in state-sanctioned textbooks. Indeed, if we presume, as Griffiths asserts, that in concert with classroom education and lessons taught at home, "the informal education offered through children's print media was the principle means by which young Japanese were socialized and prepared for adult subjecthood," this connection becomes even more vital.

Future war stories focus on a young protagonist, typically male, and they more often than not take place at least partly in the *Nanyō* 'South Seas,' the archetypical South



Pacific frontier which Griffiths cites as the setting for much imperial speculation and which resonates with Antoni's discussion of "demon islands" at the southern boundary of Japanese space (Griffiths; Antoni 171). Typically, the genre envisions Japan as a shining beacon of civilization and progress in Asia which, menaced by the degenerate ways of the Western powers, must enter into a just and noble war. Moreover, most of the stories involve disputes over colonized *Nanyō* space, and one of the earliest examples, the 1890 *Ukishiro monogatari* [浮城物語; *Tale of the Floating Fortress*], "[y]oung, male uber-patriots embark on a South Sea adventure to 'open up a giant territory tens of times the size of Japan and offer it to the Emperor'" (Griffiths).

This archetypal narrative shares many characteristics with the founding myths and the story of Momotarō. To begin, Japan, as in folktale and myth, is imperiled by impure elements. Additionally, the young protagonists bravely combat and almost universally subdue their foreign enemies. In doing so, they exemplify the virtues of the mythic and folkloric culture heroes who ensure the integrity of Japanese space. Taken as a whole, then, the body of Japanese children's future war fiction "mutually reinforced the relevance of Japan's manly, martial past and the unbroken continuum of *yamato damashii* [the 'soul of old Japan,' a term closely related to *nippon seishin*]" (Griffiths). Such a reinforcement of the state ideology adds weight to the pacification of corrupt, rebellious forces by binding current and future geopolitical circumstances to the ideographic network. This process is seen all the more clearly in its application to film.

### **The Silver Screen**

Film during the early Shōwa period provided a medium through which the cultivated ideology of the Japanese identity and its divine destiny could play out against a

backdrop of contemporary warfare. According to John W. Dower, the majority of Pacific War film constitutes a "celluloid world where art, ideology, and propaganda commingled," typified by the struggles of a pure and noble-hearted hero against a wide array of enemies of both foreign and domestic origin (35; 41-42). These foes, ranging from the physical enemy to the doubt in the hero's own heart, constitute a fundamental corruption that the hero is tasked with expelling.

Dower suggests five distinct categories of enemy in Pacific War film: 1) the anonymous and often invisible physical enemy forces; 2) the redeemable enemy who can be converted or recruited to the cause; 3) the cultural enemy, or foreign values constituting a threat to Japaneseness on the whole; 4) the tendency toward corrosive, selfish thinking that could damage the purity of the national character; and 5) the existence of war itself (41-42). Against these the hero is obligated to contend if he is to demonstrate his Japaneseness.

In the case of spiritist film, the process through which this victory is attained, according to Peter B. High, is an inner struggle to actualize the hero's identity as a Japanese, which is "problematized as a kind of paradox: while the individual had inherited this Japaneseness at birth, one must undergo a spiritual voyage in order to 'realize' it in one's own life" (223). This process, however, is not easy, as the pure state of the Japanese spirit can only be revealed through sustained effort and struggle against the constant temptation to corrupt the self with individualist thinking and Western luxuriance (390). In High's estimation, this internal struggle is the true conflict; physical battles are merely a means to this end.

From the union of these two perspectives, I propose the following model of the

world of the war film. Physical enemies bar the way to the expansion of the Japanese space, and as the mission actualized through the doctrine of *hakkō ichiu* is still ongoing, it is the divine duty and destiny of the Japanese to clear the way, that the whole world can experience the blessing of sacred guidance. Some outsiders, led by their experiences to a nascent understanding of the spiritual purity of the Japanese cause, are capable of recruitment. Those who refuse to part with their self-indulgent and degenerate ways, however, must be either neutralized or destroyed for the sake of the world. Moreover, war itself, being in direct opposition to the peace of Japanese guidance, is itself an evil, though it is necessary as long as any element of the preceding threats exists.

The corrupting ways of the outside are the most significant threat to the Japanese spirit, however, and truly performing Japaneseness therefore involves the rigorous purification of foreign thought and action from the culture on the whole as well as the individual heart. The hero best suited to overcoming this threat is the pure, guileless hero identified by Dower and discussed earlier. The sincerity and determination of his true Japanese soul render inert the call to partake of the lotus-blossoms of Western thinking. Once the crucible of war burns away any incidental residual impurities in his person, he is able to join himself to the national spirit and achieve his purpose in life, securing victory for his homeland and inspiring others with his brave deeds.

Like children's future war fiction, such a pattern fits precisely with the *hakkō ichiu* model of the world that itself is derived from and built upon the national founding narratives. In this sense, film can be mobilized to create an ideal environment in which the performance of Japaneseness approaches an iconic form that becomes a part of the mythos of the eternal national mission. The idealized war hero, in his struggles to resist

the Sirens of doubt, luxury, and individualism, contributes to the ongoing purification and pacification of the outer world through his attainment of inner purity. He is additionally recognizable to individuals familiar with Momotarō, as the youthful, pure Peach Boy is himself a model of sincere determination unsullied by ulterior motives whose enemies are as equally craven and inhuman as the specter of the West. Thus, an audience acclimated to Momotarō, the founding myths, and future war fiction could reasonably be expected to view spiritist war film as a component of this progression.

### **Conclusion**

The story of Momotarō occupies a special position in the overall landscape of early Shōwa state ideology. Its prominence in the first volume of *SKT* and strongly implicit connections to the national founding narratives is clear, and the approachability of the story as a beloved and familiar folktale provides enables the utilization of the story as an instrument of national policy and ideology. Because every Japanese child could be expected to be familiar with the narrative because of its canonization in government-sanctioned textbook readers, Momotarō's campaign against the *oni* attains a level of iconic universality wherever the story appears. Thus, the Momotarō narrative becomes an ideograph embodying the essence of the pure Japanese struggle against outside corruption. As such, it is reasonable to assume that the inclusion of Momotarō or any elements of his story in other narratives invokes this complex network of symbols.

This relationship is a critical component of the understanding of depictions of Japanese identity during the Pacific War because it indicates, as evinced by trends in education, children's popular entertainment, and the film industry at large, an overwhelming trend toward the pure inside/corrupt outside model of the world and the

sacred duty and destiny of the Japanese to dispel that corruption. Additionally, as Dower and Antoni observe, Momotarō as a beloved icon is in many ways the ideal vehicle to render the nature of the Pacific War in terms organic to the Japanese world view.

When the Momotarō narrative is understood as such, *Umi no shinpei* stands to carry substantially more weight in its visual presentation. As we shall see, the film becomes far more than a retelling of the story of Momotarō set in the exotic *Nanyō*. Rather, it becomes a re-enactment of the primal mandate upon which the performance of Japanese identity depends: the expansion of Japanese space to include all spaces and the conversion or destruction of non-Japanese identity of all kinds achieved by actualizing the essence of performative Japaneseness within the individual.

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS OF *MOMOTARŌ: UMI NO SHINPEI*

Having established an ideological and historical context for the film, we now come to an analysis of ideographic influence on the depiction of identity in *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei* itself. Because the film's narrative approach is high context and because key elements of the spiritual development and actualization of characters as "authentic" Japanese are critical to the function of the ideographs at work in the film, I have chosen to isolate and analyze these elements as they occur chronologically. In doing so, I aim to preserve the cumulative effect of the narrative through time while enabling the reader to engage and focus on the dominant themes of the work.

As a first consideration, I establish the immediate context of *Umi no shinpei* as a work of film and address the military and historical context for the events it depicts. As one of the last animated films produced during the Pacific War, the film constitutes, I assert, a full deployment of available symbol systems to maximize rhetorical effect on the audience, especially children, who would shortly be called upon to defend the home islands in the event of a physical invasion by Allied forces.

Following this contextualization, I examine the film scene by scene, investigating in specific the intertwined issues of Japaneseness and the means by which this identity is actualized. For each scene, I first summarize the major events and identify elements thereof that invoke particular ideographs as discussed in earlier chapters. These

ideographs, which may involve folklore, the founding myths, and any derivative works invested in those narratives, are then examined in order to determine how the ideographs are invoked, what prior iterations of the ideograph are invoked vertically, which related ideographs are subordinated horizontally, and what characterizes the overall impact of the deployment. Finally, the scene is examined to determine under what circumstances the characters experience what High calls a spiritist revelation that enables them to realize their identity as pure and authentic Japanese.

In particular, my analysis of the actualization of Japaneseness as experienced by the film's audience will focus on the unnamed bear character. This childlike, portly, and complaintive member of the film's core cast of characters is a new addition to Momotarō's traditional animal retinue, and his conduct is more imperfect and human than that of his comrades, who are frequently depicted as selfless, stoic, or particularly intelligent. As such, I assert that the bear functions as a cipher for the audience, expressing their misgivings, concerns, and desires. Additionally, as the bear achieves his moment of actualization just prior to the battle sequence, his journey toward true Japaneseness is most likely to parallel that of the audience, providing a model of an accessible pathway to the achievement of the ideal in the midst of personal imperfection.

Finally, the chapter explores the overall impact of the patterns delineated during the analysis and addresses the overall rhetorical message of the film. In particular, I focus on the impact of the film as an exhortation to its audience to gather spiritual fortitude to defend the Japanese home territories and to derive that fortitude from the actualization of identity brought about by the stress of war that would enable Japan to repel the Allied assault and turn the tide of the war even at such a late hour.

## Setting the Stage

*Umi no shinpei* opened to theatrical audiences in April 1945. Produced in 1944 by Shōchiku Pictures and funded by the Imperial Japanese Navy, it was the latest in a long string of animated films featuring the Momotarō narrative and the second of such films directed by Seo Mitsuyo (Dower 253). Prior to *Umi no shinpei*, Seo directed *Momotarō no Umiwashi* [桃太郎の海鷲; *Momotarō's Sea Eagles*], a 37-minute film produced by Geijutsu Eigasha and likewise supported by the Imperial Japanese Navy and released in 1943 (High 472). Among *Umiwashi*'s most notable features is the re-imagining of Momotarō's journey to Onigashima as the Imperial Navy's December 1941 assault on Pearl Harbor, an application of relatively contemporary events to the template of myth and folklore that Seo continued in *Umi no shinpei*, which adapts the 1942 fall of Singapore to the same narrative (472-73).

The selection of these events is of great significance to this study, as they represent the apex of Japan's military might in the Pacific, which had sharply declined by the time *Umiwashi* and *Umi no shinpei* were released in 1943 and 1945, respectively.

The characters and setting of *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei*—Imperial Japanese Navy paratroopers fighting against British forces in the iconic *Nanyō*—restrict the action of the film to three airborne assaults that occurred between 11 January and 20 February 1942. These operations, conducted by paratroopers of both the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy, occurred at Mandando, Celebes (11 January 1942, IJN); Palembang, Sumatra (14 February 1942, IJA); and Koepang, Dutch Timor (20 February 1942, IJN), and were instrumental in securing the region for the Empire (Rottman and Takizawa 20). While the setting of *Umi no shinpei* is never specified in the film, the events portrayed most closely



parallel the activities of the Army's 2nd Raiding Regiment at Palembang (27-28). Lack of Imperial Navy involvement in the operation notwithstanding, scenes in *Umi no shinpei* appear to mimic photographs of Palembang featured in *Shashin shūhō* [写真週報; *Photographic Weekly Report*], a weekly newsmagazine published by the Japanese government's Cabinet Information Bureau (Earhart 3; 241-43). Moreover, significant portions of the airborne jump and ensuing battle resemble the choreography of the Army assault on Palembang depicted in the 1944 film *Katō hayabusa sentōtai* [加藤隼戦闘隊; *Katō's Fighting Falcon Squadron*].

The selection of Palembang despite its being an Army operation is significant in that the fall of Singapore constituted one of Japan's most important victories of the war with the Western powers. David C. Earhart, author of *Certain Victory: Images of World War II in the Japanese Media*, observes that the surrender of British commander Lieutenant General Arthur E. Percival to a numerically inferior Japanese force commanded by Lieutenant General Yamashita Tomoyuki signaled the end of British power in East Asia and marked the achievement of one of Japan's major goals in establishing its vision of an Asia led by Japan and free from Western influence (241-43). The victory at Palembang thus constituted a high water mark in the military history of the Empire, and to actively invoke it even while Japanese and Allied forces clashed on Okinawa implied that even if Japan was outnumbered and threatened on all fronts, a stunning victory in the face of overwhelming odds was not only possible but, as demonstrated by precedent, entirely likely.

Such a suggestion strongly associates the victory of the Imperial forces against the Allies not only with Momotarō's triumph over the predatory *oni*, but also with Ninigi no

Mikoto, Jinmu Tennō, and Yamato Takeru no Mikoto's victories over rebellious forces opposed to the divine mandate of Amaterasu Ōmikami. *Umi no shinpei*, therefore, in overlaying the ideographically powerful Momotarō narrative and its mythological associations on the potent symbolism of the Singapore victory, calls on its audience to actualize its own Japanese identity by continuing this mission in spite of overwhelming odds. Should the audience pursue this path, the film suggests, it will realize its role as children of a divine destiny and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

### **Scene 1: Homecoming**

The first scene of *Umi no shinpei* details the return of four Imperial Japanese Navy paratroopers to their home village. The sailors are represented as anthropomorphic animals: a monkey, a dog, a pheasant, and a bear. Beginning with a long establishing shot of Mount Fuji, the camera then pans down to follow these four sailors as they walk along a rural path. On their way, they stop and pray at a Shintō shrine before parting ways and continuing home individually. The monkey is greeted by a crowd of village children among which is his younger brother; the dog joins his parents as they toil in the rice fields; the pheasant returns home to a nest full of baby birds, which he must feed; and the bear plays and enjoys tea and traditional Japanese sweets with his sister and mother.

For the most part, the ideographs active in this sequence are those related to the inherent divinity of Japan as a physical space and those related to the performance of civic duty in human relationships as outlined in the Imperial Rescript on Education. Throughout the scene, the audience is encouraged to identify with the character of the bear through scenes that place the audience in his role, though he is revealed toward the end of the scene to be unnaturally childlike and immature for a fighting man.

The initial establishing shot of Mount Fuji is especially powerful in its rhetorical effect. Images of Mount Fuji and the sun occur so pervasively in the visual culture of wartime Japan as to be considered ubiquitous, and through this repetition in the world of the audience the images derive their deeper meaning. Mount Fuji, Japan's tallest mountain peak, is utilized here as visual synecdoche for the whole of Japan and occurs in similar composition on a two-page full color spread in Volume 4 of *SKT* (2-3). Wide bands of sunlight that stream past the mountainside, illuminating the forest and farmland evoke not only the solar imagery of the Japanese flag but also the physical sun, which is in turn a physical emanation Amaterasu Ōmikami. That the camera must pan down from the sun and mountain scene into the valley suggests that the action of the film takes place in the shadow of Fuji and underneath the divine sun. Thus, in the first few seconds of the film the audience is securely situated in a space that is uniquely Japanese and by virtue of that fact overseen and protected by the gods.

The main characters of the film set the tone of the text through their physical appearance: charming and professional in their spotless, identical uniforms. As military men, they are immediately recognizable as possessing an especially well-developed Japanese identity and are performing an essential element of Japaneseness in serving in the Navy, following the command of the Rescript on Education to "offer [themselves] courageously to the State" (qtd. in Gluck 121). Additionally, though they are young adults, the sailors have childlike faces with large eyes and closely grouped features resembling those found in contemporary illustrations of children and on the faces of dolls. This may lead to a sense among the film's juvenile audience members that although the four sailors are adults acting in adult roles, their place in society is accessible by the

children in the audience. That is to say, if the children behave as the sailors do, they can achieve the same status, a pattern repeated throughout the film.

The main characters' apparent Japaneseness is enhanced by their visit to the Shintō shrine, or *jinja*. The first visual indication of this space is a large bell attached to a rope, traditionally rung as part of formal worship. The camera pulls back to reveal the bear ringing the bell while his companions wait behind him, hats doffed respectfully, at the position of attention. The bear returns to this small formation without turning his back on the enshrined deities and gives the command to worship. The four sailors execute a deep bow to the enshrined deities while cooing doves congregate around them—another visual connection to *SKT*, in which children at a shrine experience a similar encounter (1:11). Thereafter, the bear gives the command to straighten and to recover headgear, at which point the sailors depart the *jinja* precincts individually.

While these elements may seem unremarkable, they are critical markers of identity. The *jinja*, as a designated sacred space, is particular to Shintō, and Shintō itself tends to be unique to Japanese spaces, as it is considered that "Shintō's magnanimous harmony and its originality are the fundamental base of Japanese culture and its development" (Shintō bunka kenkyūkai 99). If, as suggested, Shintō represents the purest emanation of Japaneseness, then *jinja* constitute the purest distillation of Japanese space possible. To worship the enshrined deities at a *jinja* is therefore a fundamentally Japanese act. In visiting the *jinja*, the four sailors perform one of the most critical elements of Japaneseness in this context: paying reverence to the deities responsible for Japan's existence and continued prosperity.

The sailors' interactions with their families are also sequences heavy with

symbolic potential related to elements of the Imperial Rescript on Education: to "be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious" (qtd. in Gluck 121). The monkey is affectionate toward his younger brother and the other village children, whose admiration he sheepishly endures. The dog, whom we discover is named Wankichi, finds his aged parents working in the fields and greets them by standing rigidly at attention and announcing his return in humble, respectful terms, demonstrating his filial piety. As for the pheasant, he returns to his nest to find it populated by three chicks and immediately sets to feeding them, first from his own possessions and then by foraging and returning to the nest. Though he repeatedly misses encountering the chicks' mother, his efforts harmonize with hers, ensuring the smooth conduct of the household.

The bear's homecoming, however, is very different. Unlike the three orthodox animal companions of Momotarō, the bear is a new addition peculiar to *Umi no shinpei*. In contrast to his responsible companions, the bear appears fixed in a youthful frame of mind. We find him in his parents' home in the midst of decorating for traditional Boys' Day festivities, which are held in May. The bear's mother sews a decorative banner flown during the holiday, and the bear, along with his younger sister, playfully sets out dolls. Following this, the mother serves her children tea and traditional Japanese sweets, which the bear sailor anticipates with relish, fidgeting on his cushion and tapping his hands gleefully. His actions are self-centered and immature, and his interaction with his family is centered around preparations a holiday honoring male children. While one could argue that the bear is affectionate to his sister, he fails to exhibit most of the desirable characteristics—mentorship, humility, and duty—modeled by his comrades.

However, the bear is the character closest to the audience in terms of interests and behavior. He concerns himself with food and merrymaking as many audience members might, and his preoccupation with a children's holiday is likely to mirror that of the children in the audience. Thus, the audience is likely to identify with the character of the bear more readily than his companions.

The audience is also invited to participate in the narrative by assuming the bear's role. In the *jinja* sequence, for instance, the camera angle during the ringing of the bell places the audience in the bear's position. That the deities enshrined at the *jinja* are not noted additionally encourages audience participation because the audience can envision their local *jinja* in place of the one depicted in the film. In this way, they assume the role of the bear. His is an easy role to fill, since the film, in associating the audience with the childlike bear, does not anticipate that they have already developed a strong sense of identity and duty. Rather, they are encouraged to grow along with the bear.

## **Scene 2: River Rescue**

In the next scene, the sailors' prowess as military men and their faithfulness to one another, in accordance with the Rescript on Education, is demonstrated. While the monkey sailor (named Sarukichi), entertains and encourages the village children with tales of his military training, his younger brother Santa steals Sarukichi's uniform cap and escapes to the bank of the river to examine his prize. While attempting to wear the too-large cap and admiring his reflection in the river, though, Santa falls into the river and is rescued by Sarukichi and Wankichi with the assistance of the village children. The pheasant is absent from the scene, and the bear is depicted decorating his home for Boys' Day, oblivious to the struggle at the river. In the final sequence after the rescue, Sarukichi

and Santa admire Mount Fuji, and Sarukichi reflects on memories of his training when his attention is captured by dandelion seeds that resemble paratroopers with chutes deployed drifting on the wind.

In addition to further emphasis on the Rescript on Education through demonstration of the proper conduct of faithful friends, this scene stresses the sailors' role as proxies for the protective powers of the land: as fighting men of Japan, the sailors in all they do act on behalf of the Tennō, who in turn acts on behalf of Amaterasu Ōmikami and the long line of ancestors who join the goddess to the reigning sovereign. Moreover, the final sequence which combines military imagery with nature imagery suggests the harmony of the state with the natural world.

The sequence centered on Sarukichi, Santa, and the cap appears to be an allusion to the story "*Kaigun no niisan*" [海軍のにいさん; "Big Brother in the Navy") found in Volume 4 of *SKT* (12-20). The story, written from the perspective of a young boy, recounts his elder brother's visit home from the Navy. Of particular interest to the narrator is his brother's cap, which he is depicted as attempting to wear (17). Santa's fascination with Sarukichi's cap is similar, but there he diverges from the narrator of "*Kaigun no niisan*," who is attentive during his brother's tales of maritime service. Unlike the village children and the narrator of the *SKT* selection, Santa is merely interested in the trappings of military service. He desires, perhaps in the way of all little brothers, to look and behave like his older brother, but just as the sailor's cap is too big for Santa's head, the responsibility it symbolizes is too weighty for someone so immature.

The response of Sarukichi and Wankichi, however, exemplifies their military discipline and dedication. When a messenger brings word that Santa has fallen in the

river, Sarukichi races to the scene, the village children behind him. They pass the farm fields on their way, and Wankichi, shirtless from his labor alongside his parents, rushes to join them. Through the efforts of the entire group, Santa is able to be saved. That Wankichi immediately races to his comrade's assistance demonstrates his dedication to the command of the Imperial Rescript on Education to be true to his friends (qtd. in Gluck 121). However, they are not able to affect the rescue of Santa entirely on their own: the village children pitch in as well, and it is through their cooperative effort that Santa is hauled from the river to safety. Thus, it is the whole group's effort that is required, and all those who perform any part of that effort have acted properly.

The pheasant and bear are curiously absent from the rescue scene. While we are never informed of the pheasant's activities during that time, the film returns the audience to the bear sailor's house, where the camera surveys an impressive Boys' Day display replete with images of martial valor and featuring banners with a cherry blossom motif. The bear, apparently oblivious to the situation that has just transpired by the river, revels in the festivities as his mother looks on. Behind his mother in the shot is what appears to be an official portrait, likely of the Tennō. The face is obscured, but the high position of the portrait on the wall suggests that this is the household *goshin'ei*, an image of the sovereign intended for reverence. Thus, the bear is not only under the watchful eye of his mother, but that of the sovereign and, by implication, the Divine as well.

Such traits cause the bear to appear more similar at this stage to Santa than his own sailor comrades. For instance, while Santa was physically rescued by his brother and Wankichi, they are first and foremost sailors of the Imperial Japanese Navy, and as such, in accordance with the Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors, the "limbs" of a great body which



must "look up to Us [the Tennō] as your head" (qtd. in Tsunoda et al. 705-06).

Accordingly, Wankichi and Sarukichi are but the agents of Imperial will, which is, in keeping with the *tenjō mukyū* mandate, synonymous with Divine will. The visual reinforcement of the notion that Santa is protected by a higher power through his brother and Wankichi as proxies of Divine will establishes a precedent which comes to fruition as the film progresses and the characters develop toward actualization of their identities.

In the final sequence of the scene, Sarukichi and Santa sit on the bluff admiring the valley shadowed by Mount Fuji. A gust of wind blows the cap from Sarukichi's head and Santa takes off in pursuit while his older brother watches, transfixed, as countless dandelion seeds scattered by the wind float through the air. This momentary union with nature is amplified and ideologized when the sounds of aircraft engines and military commands related to airborne operations overwhelm the pastoral background music. Sarukichi's face assumes a severe cast; he closes his eyes and seems momentarily to be transported to another place as the dandelion seeds, which resemble parachutes, drift down through the air. The implicit connection between the scattering dandelion seeds and paratroopers combines with the image of Mount Fuji, at once symbolic of Japanese space as well as the Divine, to form a visual network that weaves Sarukichi and his sailor comrades into the natural and spiritual fabric of the realm.

Meanwhile, Santa continues his pursuit of his brother's cap, which represents the virtue and destiny of the military man—themselves key components in the actualization of the identity of the Japanese male. In the end, he does not catch the cap; instead, the wind causes it to land on his head. With the cap secured, Santa rushes back to his brother's side in a celebratory mood. For the moment, he has achieved his goal of

proximity to the powerful symbolism caught up in the cap.

Previously, Santa was taken by the cap because of its perceived ability to convey the status it signifies, and particularly critical to this progression is the recurrence of the *sakura*, or cherry blossom. The *sakura* symbolizes both the nation and its military man and represents the transience of life, especially in the case of warriors, for the blossoms scatter from their branches in full bloom and at the peak of their beauty. Nitobe Inazo, best known in the West for his English-language treatise on the *bushidō* warrior ethic, quotes Motoori Norinaga in that famous text, observing thus:

Isles of blest Japan!  
Should your Yamato spirit  
Strangers seek to scan  
Say—scenting morn's sunlit air  
Blows the cherry wild and fair! (137)

It is clear from his childish actions, then, that Santa has not attained the presence of mind to understand the significance of the *sakura* on his brother's cap. He merely sees it as an exciting trifle that betokens adventure instead of a physical representation of an internal transformation and acceptance of one's own duty and mortality.

It is through his failure to apprehend and perform the appropriate response to such a stimulus as represented by his immaturity and mischief that Santa initially loses the precious cap and must endanger himself in an attempt to recover it. However, it appears that Santa experiences a level of personal growth from the stress and peril of the river. As he is hoisted to safety, he once again dons Sarukichi's cap, and this time it remains in place, implying that the ordeal he has endured has taken Santa a step closer to being worthy of the cap and all it symbolizes. Then, in the final sequence, the wind—nature itself—places the cap on Santa's head, suggesting his journey has begun in earnest.

### Scene 3: Opening the Way

Following the events in the sailors' home village, the audience is transported from the idyllic valley view of Mount Fuji to a clearly foreign shore located in the *Nanyō*, the foreign space on the edge of Japanese territory. There, rabbits dressed in tropical service uniforms of the Imperial Japanese Navy draw up plans for an airfield and enlist the aid of local inhabitants, represented as naked animals of exotic provenance, in its construction. The clearing of the land, construction of the buildings, and preparation of the airfield to receive aircraft appears very much a game to the locals, who sing about the pleasant and enjoyable nature of the work. Once the task is completed, the scene ends in a dramatic upshot focused on the Japanese flag waving proudly from a wooden tower.

In the main, this scene exists to introduce the audience to the inhabitants of the *Nanyō*, provide insight into their nature, and demonstrate the activities of the Navy in that corner of the world. On a deeper level, the scene invokes a number of potent ideographs that, once fully in play, bind the activities on the island to the *Tenson kōrin* narrative discussed in earlier chapters. This refiguring of the Navy's pacification and assimilation mission in the *Nanyō* as a version of the events surrounding the descent of Ninigi no Mikoto and his retinue from Takamagahara lays the foundation for later development of the theme of expansion in the Pacific as a reenactment or continuation of the founding.

To begin, it is clear from the beginning of the scene that the rabbits are in foreign territory. They hide in trees and crouch in foxholes until they draw up plans to bring order to the wild and overgrown chaos around them. The planning takes place in a building designated *Kaigun setsueitai honbu* [海軍設營隊本部; Navy Construction Unit Headquarters], which, surrounded by thick vegetation in a small clearing, appears to have

been wrought upon the landscape by force of will alone. However, the island will not remain this way for long. In the midst of the alien danger of the island, the Navy's engineering and construction specialists have a clear plan: the ordered, angular lines drawn on the map suggest the imposition of familiar order in contrast to the wild, untamed chaos inherent in the jagged shores and tropical growth.

We are first introduced to the inhabitants of this space during the construction montage. Some, such as the deer, elephants, and rhinoceroses, possess no humanizing qualities. Unlike the Navy rabbits, they are simply animals, typical and naked, functioning as living construction equipment. Other animals, such as a group of wild felines and the monkeys who apparently constitute the leadership of the island, are more humanoid. The monkeys even wear a few articles of clothing, such as fez caps and kilts. Under the watchful eye of a particularly tall, long-nosed monkey dressed in a white skirt and carrying a staff, these animals work diligently until the airfield is complete. The crowning achievement of their labor, however, is neither the runway nor the hangars, but a tall wooden tower from which flies the *nisshouki*, or rising sun flag.

Under the direction of the Japanese rabbits, these animals cooperate and function as a constructive whole. However, throughout the scene they retain their foreign character, and while they are helpful and friendly, they clearly function in a subordinate capacity. By the completion of the scene, the reason for this distinction is clear. In building the airfield, the rabbits have imposed Japaneseness on the island. Like the native Japanese space depicted in the film's initial scenes, the island is, by the end of the montage, shadowed by a towering structure and bathed in the light of the sun's rays—albeit a tower made from wood and a sun depicted on a flag. These artificial edifices

signify the natural Japanese landscape, for inasmuch as they serve to evoke the originals, the constructed proxies function in an identical manner. They serve to Japanize the space of the island in a physical sense, just as the arrival of the Navy promises a cultural shift.

In many ways, this sequence in the film closely parallels the events preceding the *Tenson kōrin* narrative. According to *Nihon shoki*, prior to the descent of Ninigi no Mikoto, it was discovered that the way was not clear for him to proceed because a powerful deity stood in his way (Aston 77). This entity, the chief of the earthly gods, was Sarutahiko no Ōkami, a divinity of the crossroads. Due to his great height and fearsome appearance, none of the heavenly gods would approach him. At length, a goddess named Ame no Uzume no Mikoto was sent to negotiate with Sarutahiko no Ōkami in order to secure the safe descent of Ninigi no Mikoto, and it was found that the earthly god had friendly intentions:

The God of the cross-ways answered [Ame no Uzume no Mikoto] and said: —'I have heard that the child of Ama-terasu no Oho-kami is now about to descend, and therefore I have come respectfully to meet and attend upon him . . . I will go before and be his harbinger.' (77)

Following this exchange, Sarutahiko no Ōkami assisted in clearing the way for Ninigi no Mikoto to descend to earth from Takamagahara.

While there is no instance of a parallel for Ame no Uzume in *Umi no shinpei*, there exists a possible reference to Sarutahiko no Ōkami. The tall, long-nosed monkey depicted as overseeing the animals, in addition to occupying an area depicted as both a physical crossroads and a means by which aircraft can descend to earth, bears a startling resemblance to traditional depictions of Sarutahiko no Ōkami as described in earlier chapters. Additionally, the deity's name includes the character 猿 [*saru*; "monkey"].

While I have encountered no confirmation that the long-nosed monkey in the montage is

an allusion to Sarutahiko no Ōkami, the situation and visual referents as well as the potential for a pun on the use of *saru* provide an intriguing possibility.

Most audience members would have been well aware of this story. Volume 5 of *SKT* includes the story "*Tenson*" [天孫; "Heavenly Grandson"], which recounts Amaterasu Ōmikami's command that Ninigi no Mikoto descend to earth, the encounter with Sarutahiko no Ōkami, and the resultant advent of Ninigi no Mikoto (94-100). The story features several illustrations, among which is a depiction of Ame no Uzume parleying with Sarutahiko no Ōkami (99). As a result, it is plausible that the audience might have seen the parallels between the long-nosed monkey and Sarutahiko no Ōkami.

If the long-nosed monkey constitutes an allusion to this deity, the film becomes not only a retelling of the Momotarō narrative, which parallels the founding narratives addressed in previous chapters, but it also becomes a direct retelling of *Tenson kōrin* itself, with the Japanese standing in for the heavenly gods of Takamagahara and the islanders representing the earthly gods who welcomed Ninigi no Mikoto upon his arrival. As we shall see, there is considerable evidence to suggest this hypothesis.

#### **Scene 4: The Descent**

Following the construction of the airfield, the film's main cast arrives on the island. Transport and scout planes appear overhead, startling and scattering the native inhabitants, and land on the newly completed runway. The tails of the transports are marked with peaches, the first overt reference to Momotarō himself since the film's opening titles. Fascinated by this strange event, the islanders cluster around the plans and sing in wonderment as Momotarō and his troops debark. The paratroopers make a great spectacle of their arrival, parading past jubilant islanders. Thereafter, Sarukichi interacts

briefly with the long-nosed monkey and two of his deputies, and the islanders shower Momotarō and his men with food, gifts, and admiration.

Most significant in this scene is the advent of Momotarō and his retinue on the island. The arrival of the film's eponymous hero and the reaction thereto by the islanders furthers the connection to the *Tenson kōrin* narrative established in the previous scene. Images of the sun and suggestions of Mount Fuji appear again as well, strengthening the sense that the purity and sacredness of Japan has come to the island with Momotarō's arrival. The islanders solidify this relationship, demonstrating by their deferent behavior the presumed superior status of Momotarō and his troops, and the scene even places Momotarō in the position of a leader receiving tribute from a seated position suggesting enthronement, further reinforcing his status in the film as a representative of divine will.

The islanders' reaction to the arrival of the paratroopers clearly underscores the technological and cultural disparities that exist between them. After the planes land, the indigenous animals, who had been in hiding, rush the airfield to get a better look at the strange machines that have arrived. Overall, the behavior of the indigenous animals is childlike in nature: some creep up to the planes, touch them, and dart away excitedly; others stare in wonder; and still others cavort aimlessly in the novelty of the moment. When Momotarō's plane arrives, the long-nosed monkey and his deputies watch admiringly as Momotarō emerges, sword in hand and full of military dignity. Following immediately behind are Wankichi, Sarukichi, and the bear sailor; as they pass, the monkeys admire the three sailors. This behavior contrasts sharply with that of the rabbits, who treat their leader's arrival as a matter of significant but mechanical routine.

This very literal descent of Momotarō and his forces to the island strongly

suggests a connection to the *Tenson kōrin* narrative. Additionally, the fact that Momotarō is the only human to yet appear in the film is especially significant. Only he carries a Japanese sword, and only he garners the universal respect of both the Imperial Navy personnel and the islanders. Dower and Ueno both suggest that Momotarō's exceptional status as the only human—and a very thoroughly Japanese human at that—establishes him firmly as a kind of ur-Japanese, fully actualized by his very nature and positively beyond reproach (Dower 251-52; Ueno 86). Dower goes so far as to point out Momotarō's status as an *arahitogami*, or living deity, a term typically reserved for the Tennō (252). If the symbolic significance of his arrival is paired with these assertions, it is reasonable to view Momotarō as an allusion to Ninigi no Mikoto: his way having been successfully prepared under the auspices of both his scouts and a friendly indigenous leader, he arrives in order to advance the boundaries of Japanese space.

The processional march following Momotarō's debarkation deepens this connection. With much ceremony, Momotarō's patatrooper unit parades past to the accompaniment of the film's title march led by Momotarō and Wankichi, who bears the rising sun flag at the head of the procession. Literally and symbolically following the sun, Momotarō greets the exuberant indigenous animals, who wave and cheer as he passes. The procession is not the advance of a conqueror into subjugated territory. Rather, it is the triumphant entry of a welcomed savior into his new domain.

This acceptance of the superiority of Momotarō and his troops aligns with the cosmological model of *Tenson kōrin* and, by later extension, *hakkō ichiu*. The indigenous animals seems to immediately apprehend his identity and purpose in coming to the island—to spread the virtue of his civilization until all the corners of the earth, no matter



how wild, exist under one roof.

Sarukichi's interaction with the long-nosed monkey and his deputies suggests the potential for kinship between the islanders and Momotarō's troops. When Sarukichi stumbles upon the indigenous monkeys, he seems to see something of himself in them, and they likewise recognize a bit of themselves in him. Through this exchange, the film suggests that there is potential in the islanders. They, too, can aspire to the virtue demonstrated by Sarukichi and the rest of the troops, even if they currently lack the knowledge and the means to achieve this.

In the scene that follows, the islanders shower their new protectors with food and gifts. Some even use a banana leaf to fan Momotarō, who presides over the scene from his command chair. Despite potential kinship, the indigenous animals respond to the troops in terms approaching worship, suggesting the inherent virtue of the Japanese presence on the island and the gratitude the islanders feel in being given the chance to benefit from their new protectors' arrival.

### **Scene 5: School Days**

In this scene, Wankichi struggles in vain to teach Japanese to the islanders assembled in an open-air classroom near the island base. He presents his students with isolated elements of the Japanese *katakana* syllabary and related vocabulary words written on a chalkboard and drills the students in their repetition. After the islanders successfully follow Wankichi's lead, he enthusiastically calls upon them to repeat the exercise on their own. The scene devolves rapidly into chaos until Sarukichi, assisted by the bear sailor, renders the curriculum into song. The islanders quickly take to the lively tune and soon can be observed singing it, thus continuing their studies, while happily

performing labor around the base on behalf of the sailors.

The objective of this scene is to demonstrate the benevolent nature of the military presence in the *Nanyō*, to highlight the nature of the islanders as primitive peoples in desperate need of a cultural uplift facilitated by education, and to tie these elements to the divine mission outlined by Jinmu Tennō. In so doing, the scene reinforces the premise that the uncivilized peoples of the world lack for Japan's guidance and gratefully set to the task of civilizing—*i e.* Japanizing—themselves when given the chance. However, the task is difficult, and it is only through sustained cooperative effort that it can be achieved.

The first element of note in the scene is that Wankichi's classroom closely resembles the standard Japanese elementary school environment as depicted in *SKT* (1:18). Desks, benches, and a teacher's lectern order the space in neat rows, and the sharp lines and regimented arrangement contrast sharply with the undeveloped areas of the island. The locals are unfamiliar with the purpose of such a place, and they bicker over seating and chatter until called to order by Wankichi's whistle. Here we see the pitiable state of the islanders. They have no sense of education or its virtues and seem not even to know why they have been called to the classroom.

Such a rendering of the islanders suggests a passage from *Nihon shoki*, in which Jinmu Tennō observes the following of the primitive inhabitants of the land:

"At present things are in a crude and obscure condition, and the people's minds are unsophisticated. They roost in nests or dwell in caves. Their manners are simply what is customary. Now if a great man were to establish laws, justice could not fail to flourish." (Aston 131)

This in turn evokes a selection from Volume 10 of *SKT* titled "*Nanyō da yori*" [南洋だより; "Letter from the South Seas"] that features prominently a photograph of Yap Islanders in various states of undress alongside a description of the customs of this "burly, black-

bodied" people (29). Put together, these two associations suggest to the audience both the unfathomable primitiveness of the islanders and their capacity for salvation.

Wankichi's ultimately ill-fated attempt to provide enlightenment through the teaching of Japanese is in keeping with Japanization curricula in use around the Empire during the period. According to Higuchi Wakako, instruction in the "Japanese language was considered the best and most fundamental method for organising" colonized peoples because such instruction would awaken the Japanese spirit in them and facilitate awareness of their common identity with the Japanese (22).

Ultimately, Wankichi's approach appears to suffer because of his presumptions about what comprises Japaneseness. Since, as discussed previously, speaking Japanese can constitute *de facto* Japaneseness, Wankichi seems to believe that any understanding of the language includes an understanding of the cultural and behavioral conventions that accompany it. His curriculum, drawn from a Japanese model, fails to meet the needs of his students, who possess neither the language skills nor the sociocultural funds of knowledge to navigate the classroom landscape, and the result is chaos. In contrast, Sarukichi's solution to problem through song suggests that non-Japanese peoples require special handling in order to embark on the journey toward civilization. As the only member of the group with any measure of on-screen interaction with the natives, Sarukichi is the most likely to have any understanding of how the islanders' culture, such as it is, actually works. Instead of relying upon a purely Japanese approach, Sarukichi seems to understand that the islanders require a model of education that will impart the intended content while maintaining an organic level of comfort. Clearly, his efforts are a success: the islanders are able to incorporate their studies into everyday life, improving

themselves while providing assistance to their benefactors in the Imperial Navy.

That the natives can only be reached through music may strike the reader as especially ethnocentric; the islanders cannot learn in the conventional manner, but they appear hard-wired to indulge their love of music and can thus be coaxed into learning by their Japanese guardians. Moreover, that the alternative to speaking the Japanese language is to speak no language at all suggests the inherently inferior nature of the indigenous culture and language. However, viewed through the lens of the film's own internal ideology, the concept reinforced for the audience is that the islanders, while generous and good at heart, are incapable of improving themselves without considerable assistance from Japan.

#### **Scene 6: Mail Call**

Following the teaching montage the sailors enjoy a rare moment of repose. The pheasant, in his first appearance since the descent, wiles away the time sketching Sarukichi, who strikes a fierce pose. This is interrupted by the arrival of the mail, which includes care packages for the paratroopers. Each member of the main cast is shown unpacking and partaking in the items from home: the bear focuses on a toy, Wankichi shares a moment of mirth with his comrades in arms, the pheasant reflects on the growth of the children he left behind, and Sarukichi muses on a letter from his younger brother.

Although this scene is fairly short, lasting only about two minutes, it provides the audience considerable insight into the growth of the main characters. The bear has made no apparent advances, still being ultimately preoccupied with himself. Wankichi, though he is playful, thinks of the wellbeing of others first, and the pheasant calmly and serenely reflects on those he has left behind. However, it is Sarukichi who assembles all the pieces

into a coherent whole. He apprehends the significance of his role as a sailor in light of the wellbeing of others and those waiting at home, and instead of resorting to mirth or withdrawal, he emerges from this realization changed and determined. As the first among the sailors to transcend himself on screen, Sarukichi establishes the standard as well as the expectation that such a transformation must take place.

The first major element of the scene, Sarukichi's portrait, represents an attempt to mimic the spiritual growth to which the Japanese fighting man aspires. While the pheasant sketches, Sarukichi makes his best attempt to appear fierce and courageous, striking a pose that is associated in this film with the moment of spiritual awakening that immediately precedes a character's self-actualization. That the pose is forced suggests that Sarukichi, for all his intelligence and bravado, is unactualized and, moreover, well aware of the fact.

Once the care packages are distributed, however, each character's true nature is revealed. The bear haphazardly dumps and scatters the contents of his bag, digging until he locates a small toy. This item, a woven "finger trap," occupies the entirety of the bear's attention, and when his fingers become stuck, he rolls around on the ground in gleeful, over-exaggerated amusement at his predicament. Meanwhile, Wankichi has attracted a group of rabbits with what appears to be canned food. In fact, it contains a canned "spring snake," which when opened leaps out to the mirth of all assembled. While both sailors' reactions at first appear equally immature, the bear sailor's joy extends only to himself. On the other hand, Wankichi actively includes others.

The pheasant is, as usual, the portrait of maturity. The contents of his package, which include sandals, food, and other sundries, are arranged carefully next to him as he

sits, inspecting a photograph of the baby birds he has left behind. They have grown substantially and are now clothed, and the pheasant reflects on the apparent passage of time that has occurred while he and his comrades have been away. While the pheasant is somewhat withdrawn, he is neat and orderly, having no use for childish diversions. Moreover, his concern is the welfare of those at home, suggesting his temperance.

Sarukichi begins the scene lying on his back reading a letter. His attention is suddenly caught by something in the contents of the letter, and he sits up, his expression focused. Next we see the text of the letter itself, written in a childlike hand and composed almost entirely of *katakana* script. The letter states that "I [Santa] am waiting on big brother's meritorious deeds." This text, which remains on the screen for approximately ten seconds, is legible to any in the audience who have mastered the *katakana* script taught in the first grade textbooks, and its contents are simple and straightforward.

The words prompt a moment of understanding in Sarukichi that is intended to translate to the audience as well. Santa does not wait eagerly for his brother's return, nor does he wish for Sarukichi's safety. Instead, he urges his elder brother on to deeds of merit in service to the nation, suggesting that these are what matter most rather than life and comfort. From this, Sarukichi extracts an emotional truth that enables him to transcend his current situation and see his ultimate purpose. In the throes of this moment of clarity, Sarukichi's gaze is drawn up to the sunlit clouds above, and his appearance becomes stern and courageous. However, it has none of the forced, artificial qualities of his pose at the beginning of the scene. From this it can be gathered that true actualization of one's identity comes not from selfishness, merrymaking, or concern about home, but in dedicating oneself to the mission at hand.

### Scene 7: Three Scouts

The next scene opens with a lively depiction of sailors engaged in *jūkendō*, "the way of the rifle-bayonet," a modern martial art related to *kendō*, or Japanese fencing. At the same time, a plane crewed by the pheasant and two rabbits takes off to scout Onigashima, the island of *oni* to which Momotarō traditionally journeys. The paratroopers continue their training while the scouting mission occurs off screen. The plane returns some time later missing half a wing. Additionally, one of the rabbit crew has been killed, but the plane has secured valuable photographs of the base at Onigashima, which will enable the paratroopers to plan their assault.

This scene exists for three primary reasons. First, it demonstrates that self-sacrifice is a necessary component of duty, as in the case of the rabbit that dies. Second, the sequences involving the bear focus on his self-absorption and endless complaints, which contrast sharply with the disciplined conduct of those around him. Finally, the scene on the whole introduces the presence of an enemy who, in keeping with the patterns evident in most Pacific War films, exists primarily off screen. The enemy's presence on Onigashima and the pheasant's scouting mission, both components of the traditional Momotarō narrative, bind the events of the film to the Momotarō ideograph, but this continues to be subordinated to the national mission ideograph established in previous scenes through repeated invocation of the founding narratives.

The demise of the rabbit is the first mention of death in the film, and it is not without significance. He has given his life in the pursuit of the footage of Onigashima, enabling the success of the coming mission. That any one particular character has died is not significant. Rather, it is only critical that a noble death has occurred, as the event

returns the film to the theme of transcendence. Although the rabbit doubtless had his own concerns, he has conducted himself with merit, died an honorable death in battle, and advanced the Imperial cause. In this way he has actualized himself as a warrior who has done his duty at the cost of his own life, a fact recognized by the pheasant and the other rabbit crewman, who mourn silently at the shattered airplane after making their report to Momotarō. Thus, what Sarukichi's moment of actualization has implied the death of the rabbit now makes explicit: the actualization of one's identity lies in than the execution of one's duty—to the death, if need be.

In utter contrast to the rabbit's selfless sacrifice and the maturity of his mournful comrades, the conduct of the bear sailor highlights the depths of his selfish, childish behavior. During the *jūkendō* session, while it is apparent from the background and the sounds of vigorous training that the others are fully engaged with their task, the bear is, not surprisingly, caught up in his own private misery. "Oh, it's hot," he exclaims, tugging the protective headgear from his face. He mops at the sweat pouring down his face, continuing to chant, "So hot, so hot. Oh, it's so hot!" We see nothing of the rest of the practice session. Rather, the focus is the bear's uphill (and ultimately unsuccessful) struggle to exert self-discipline amidst discomfort, which is only brought to a halt when the overhead passage of the scout plane on its return reduces him to shocked silence.

This scene is also the first time in the film that Onigashima, the enemy base of operations—or the enemy in any context, for that matter—is mentioned overtly. As Dower observes of war film in general, this is not unusual because "[m]any Japanese war films have no explicit enemies at all; the focus remains almost exclusively on the pure self" (*War & Peace* 39). The critical focus of *Umi no shinpei*, too, lies in the question of



identity. The process by which persons are purified, actualized, and brought into alignment with an ideal is far more significant than who fills the role of enemy in this particular iteration of the struggle to dispel corruption and restore purity.

That the enemy base scouted by the pheasant is named Onigashima in direct reference to the *oni*'s base of operations in the traditional Momotarō story concretizes the film's role as a retelling of the folktale. We can reasonably expect that in the scenes to come, Momotarō and his companions will assault Onigashima, triumph over the *oni* there, whoever they may be, and re-establish the proper order of the world. However, by now it is also clear that Momotarō and his story are not the dominant ideographs at work in the film. Rather, they are subordinated to the ideographs of the founding myth that recur repeatedly.

In many ways, the film could be recast as the story of Jinmu Tennō or Ninigi no Mikoto leading troops in the *Nanyō* without damaging the substance of the narrative up to this point. Even the pheasant, whose scouting role is such an integral part of the story, has his rough equivalents in the founding narratives such as the scouts of Ninigi no Mikoto who clear the way for his descent and the *yata-garasu*, a great crow which guides Jinmu Tennō on his advance east (Aston 115-16; Philippi 169-70). The function of Momotarō, then, is to render the events in the story accessible even to those young audiences with little understanding of the founding but ample exposure to Momotarō through textbooks and other elements of everyday life.

### **Scene 8: Making Ready**

Following the acquisition of the photographic map of Onigashima, Momotarō assembles his troops and gives an encouraging speech laced with references to duty,

family, and the state. The paratroopers are then shown packing their parachutes, taking care to smooth, fold, and secure them carefully to ensure proper deployment. After this, the paratroopers stand in formation with parachutes on their backs while Momotarō and a number of his subordinates visually and physically inspect their personal equipment. Uniformed cooks pack metal mess kits, snacks, and bottled beverages for transport while aircraft ground crew fuel the planes. When all appears ready, Momotarō, observing the scene from his command post, gazes thoughtfully into the rising sun.

Most importantly, we see a renewed sense of purpose and group effort in this sequence. Though brief, the scene provides an opportunity to see the effects of the death of the rabbit in the previous sequence on the characters. Even though he is never shown in direct contact with the rabbit, the bear seems to have responded strongly to the reality underscored by the event, perhaps because of his friendship with the pheasant. As a result, the bear especially grows closer to his moment of self-actualization, and even Momotarō, who is assumed to already have actualized his identity, is moved to once again consider the great motivating purpose driving the paratroopers' mission.

Until this point, the bear has been solely absorbed in his own joys and sorrows. However, in the preparation montage he begins to contribute to the group effort with clumsy but sincere vigor. While there are a variety of reasons why the bear may have finally detached from his selfish concerns, this change may be directly related to the death of the rabbit in the previous scene. The overhead passage of the damaged plane squelches the bear's endless complaints about the weather, and his slack-jawed expression as he watches it come in for a landing—while others swarm to the field to assist the crew—marks a point of divergence.

Until the rabbit's death, no one dies in the film, and although Santa comes very close, the bear is neither aware of nor involved in that crisis. It seems to take the inescapable reality of death to crystallize for the bear that his petty suffering is of little concern in light of the greater scope of the mission. As a cipher for the audience, he may also reflect the shifting perceptions of young viewers who until the rabbit's death may view the victory of Momotarō's men as a foregone conclusion with very little at stake. With the death of the rabbit, however, it becomes apparent that while victory is still the presumed outcome, it can only be so if everyone does his duty to his utmost, even in the face of individual suffering and death. The anguish of the comrades who survive the rabbit transpires in disciplined silence, and this is a lesson to the bear, who is the pheasant's friend, that no one holds a monopoly on woe: everyone suffers, but the appropriate response is to pull together and support one another rather than to complain.

For the audience, the scene also provides an opportunity to see and feel the effects of the preparations for departure: from Momotarō's speech to the harmonious group effort to the auspicious sunrise on the morning of departure, earth, heaven, and the forces that connect both seem universally prepared to ensure victory, and even the smallest element of that preparation has value. However, even as the paratroopers prepare to fly into battle, we remain uncertain as to whom they will fight. Thus far, Onigashima has been referenced and vague mention of "the enemy" has occurred, but no enemies have been seen, and their motives have not been explained. The next scene directly addresses this.

### **Scene 9: Pirates and Prophecy**

The scene that immediately follows the paratroopers' preparation to attack opens with the silhouette of a black, three-masted sailing ship cutting across the screen. For the

first time in the film a narrator speaks, telling the story of the fate of a long-vanished island kingdom in the *Nanyō*. This kingdom, ruled by a benevolent king, enjoys the blessings of peace until mysterious black ships bearing white-skinned strangers arrive. Through a series of deceptions, they swindle the king out of his kingdom. The white-skinned men, though they claim to be merchants, are actually pirates, and they mercilessly attack the island. The king and his people battle valiantly to the last, but their simple weapons are no match for the guns of the marauding Westerners. There is, however, a silver lining to this tragic tale: an ancient prophecy declares that divine warriors will someday come from an eastern land to liberate the people.

This scene is exceptional in that it is the only scene in the film in which there are no Japanese characters, a fact reinforced by the presence of a narrator, who must intervene in the absence of any familiar frame of reference to render explicit that which the audience cannot be assumed to know. The content of the scene is entirely foreign, occupied as it is with the depredations of Western colonizers in the *Nanyō* prior to Japanese expansion into the space. Visuals during these sequences are typified by human silhouettes drawn with startling attention to historical detail, at least relative to other scenes, where charming anthropomorphic animals stand in for people. The silhouettes, which are thoroughly human in appearance, move in what appears to be imitation of shadow-plays as well, abstracting them even further from the world of Momotarō, his sailors, and the jungle creatures they have set out to enlighten.

As it breaks sharply with the film's main narrative and primary mode of visual presentation, the effect of the pirate scene is jarring. It contrasts with the benevolent and largely organic appearance and arrival of Momotarō and his troops in the South Seas and

underscores the rapacious, deceitful nature of the white-skinned pirates who, like the Americans who forced Japan to open to the West in 1853, arrive in black ships. That the scene is introduced just prior to the paratroopers' departure for the battle against heretofore unseen *oni* suggests that the Caucasian pirates should be associated with the *oni*, a connection verified in later scenes. This association contextualizes the conflict in which Momotarō and the sailors find themselves embroiled, and it clarifies what their duty is: they will fulfill the ancient prophecy by driving out the *oni*—in reality white-skinned interlopers who have stolen the kingdoms of the *Nanyō*—and expanding the benevolent, pure dominion of Japanese space in accordance with prophecy.

#### **Scene 10: With the Sun**

The flashback scene fades out to reveal Momotarō and his troops assembled before their planes in formation in the dawn light. Strains of the official bugle rendition of the national anthem of Japan ring out as the troops gaze determinedly into the distance (Rikujō jieitai daiichi ongakutai). Following the sunrise formation sequence, the islanders race from their homes to the airfield. They enthusiastically chase after the airplanes as they take off, waving to the departing sailors. Following this sequence, the transport and escort planes cut through a bright morning sky, white clouds below them, as the film's title theme reprises. Even Momotarō indulges in the festive mood, and the bear sailor jokes with Sarukichi and Wankichi. The three turn, glancing out the window, and they see the pheasant waving to them from the cockpit of his aircraft before pulling ahead of the formation, presumably in his traditional role as scout.

This triumphant procession of the paratroopers toward their meeting with destiny, blessed as it is with clear skies and bright sunlight, is a strong endorsement of their cause.

Group unity is high, and all appear joined together in enthusiasm for the duty that lies before them. For the audience, too, this sequence likely represents an omen of the coming victory. It is the culmination of the characters' efforts since the film began and the result of the training, instruction, and life given to them by instructors, elders, and parents.

The assembly of the assault force by dawn, the playing of the national anthem, and the preponderance of solar imagery serve to underscore yet again an inescapable unity between the re-imaging of the Momotarō story that is the film's most superficial layer, the interpretation of Momotarō as acting Tennō and therefore direct agent of the solar deity in war and peace, and the immediately relevant events unfolding in the Pacific. Momotarō as a symbolic proxy for the Tennō, is in turn a proxy for the divine. He leads sailors who embark upon their mission under the protection of and with the blessings of the gods, an association fused through this symbolic arrangement to audience consideration of their very real counterparts in the Imperial armed forces.

That the sailors are encouraged by the islanders as they head to the battle on Onigashima, and, perhaps most significantly, that the sailors are visibly moved by the presence of the islanders demonstrates the strength of the connection the audience is intended to surmise exists between them. Since the islanders are depicted much like children in light of the sailors' guidance, their seeing their mentors off can be interpreted as a demonstration of gratitude and honest goodwill. Additionally, it is the islanders that the main characters see last on their way to the battle, a sight that appears significant in the bear's spiritual development, as we shall shortly see. The island animals represent the fruition of the sailors' efforts, and the sequence suggests that the cause, if the characters or audience previously had any doubt, is undeniably worth fighting for.

### Scene 11: Through the Storm

A fierce tropical storm blows through the paratroopers' vicinity, and rain begins to fall, spattering the windshields of the transport plane. The rabbit pilots ascend to avoid the worst of the weather, but it is ultimately to no avail. The sky darkens, water seeps in through the body of the aircraft, and strong winds buffet the formation. Back at the island base, the same storm lashes the airfield, violently whipping trees to and fro. Eventually, however, the sun breaks through the clouds for both the paratroopers and their comrades on the ground. In the peaceful minutes before they must ready to jump, the paratroopers enjoy a meal and then don their gear. Thereafter, they jump from the plane into battle.

Here it becomes clear that the physical foes on Onigashima are not the real enemy to be overcome. The doubt symbolized by the storm represents the enemy within, the attraction to personal comfort and pleasure that could subvert the will to duty (Dower *War & Peace* 49). In many films, as Dower observes, this is the most pernicious of foes (49). The persistent selfishness of characters like the bear represents a breakdown in discipline that could, in turn, doom others. The physical passage through the storm, however, represents the dispersal of those doubts, and the ultimate triumph derives its power from solar imagery representing at once the nation, the divine, and the clarity of the sailors' own spirit.

When the storm initially arises, all solar images are absent. Not only is the physical sun obscured, but the Japanese flag does not fly from the tower on the island. However, the will of the sailors is strengthened to endure this crisis through a physical reminder of all that is at stake. The rabbits on the island hang a small cloth doll near the mouth of the tent, and as the doll turns in the wind, the scene fades to reveal a similar doll

hanging in the cockpit of the plane. Here the dolls form a symbolic link between the rabbits in the tent and their comrades in the air, fusing the intentions of both. While the storm has caused worry and perhaps even a moment of doubt, the determination and hope of the entire force based on the island combines to dispel that doubt. Even though the sun is obscured, faith in the mission persists.

Once the plane is once again secure in the embrace of the sun, all substantive danger seems to have passed. Pilots, crew, and paratroopers then pass around lunchboxes filled with rice and pickled plums and consume them in the light of the sun. The lunchboxes resemble the Japanese flag in that each contains a rectangular portion of white rice garnished with a round pickled plum in the center. The appearance of these meals is a source of universal joy, and in a way, the sailors partake of the national essence as well as the divine solar essence by consuming the flag-shaped rice dish. This communion with identity, mission, and essence strengthens the sailors' wills, and there is no indication whatsoever that they are in any danger. Although rabbit aircrewmen man their guns with determined countenances, the sky remains unsullied by the enemy's presence, symbolizing that the true foe has already been vanquished.

Once preparations for the jump begin, evidence emerges as to Sarukichi's changed status. As the paratroopers array themselves for battle, Sarukichi ties on a headband emblazoned with the rising sun. Only he arrays himself thus, and as the only one of the three main characters on the plane to have undergone a moment of spiritual transcendence on screen, he appears to be the only one worthy of equipping such an item other than Momotarō, who from the first has been depicted wearing the peach headband that is part of his traditional garb. In wearing the sun headband, Sarukichi signals to his



comrades and to the audience that he has become one with the national mission, fusing his will to that of the great mandate.

The bear sailor, on the other hand, is a nervous wreck. Though he attempts to encourage himself, he fidgets endlessly. Toward the end of this sequence, though, a change takes place. The bear becomes settled and quiet, apparently having made peace with whatever has troubled him. His gaze becomes distant as he crosses his arms, and he is, for the first time since leaving the comforts of home, at peace. When the alarm sounds shortly thereafter, signaling the paratroopers to ready for their jump, the bear snaps to work with renewed resolve. His actions are quick, smart, and confident, his countenance brave and serious, and when he approaches the door of the plane to jump, he leaps into the air to join his comrades with a stern look of determination.

In those few quiet seconds on the plane before the jump, the bear has experienced his moment of spiritual revelation. Just what finally prompted the transformation is left unstated, but through a slow accumulation of experiences, he has come through his own storm at last and understands his purpose. For the audience, the bear's awakening to his destiny is an indication that purification and rectification are ultimately possible, even in the case of a childish, self-absorbed character like the bear. If he can rise to the high calling of his destiny, the audience can as well.

### **Scene 12: Devil's Island**

Once Momotarō and his troops touch down on Devil's Island, they join the battle immediately. Sailors unpack and distribute weapons, establish defenses, and even assemble mobile artillery pieces. They then assault the enemy's positions, clearing machine gun emplacements and attacking a formation of tanks moving down a forest

road. During a frontal assault on the enemy's main base, they rout the enemy, who take the form of gangly humanoids clad in British uniforms. Thereafter, Momotarō extracts unconditional surrender from the cowardly and despicable enemy commanders.

The result of the battle is a foregone conclusion from the first, and its purpose is to function as a visual reinforcement of the promise that the spiritist actualization of pure self will bring about promised results. This scene appears to be modeled to some degree after the Imperial Army's overwhelming victory at Palembang as depicted in *Katō hayabusa sentōtai*, as discussed previously. Even in the midst of the battle, the enemy remains little more than distant gunfire until the final five minutes of the film. If the victory seems something of an anticlimax, it is worth remembering that the physical enemy is of minimal importance. The greatest struggle for the Japanese man of war is to actualize his own nature and to execute his duty at all costs. Thus, once this has been accomplished for the bear, who is the most selfish member of Momotarō's retinue, the victory of the Japanese forces is inevitable.

Victory comes naturally and relatively bloodlessly. For instance, in the assault on a pernicious enemy machine gun nest, none of paratroopers are injured or killed, and it seems almost child's play to reach the nest, from which a water-cooled machine gun protrudes comically. The bear sailor, in a show of bravery that earlier would have been unthinkable, charges the machine gun nest and, after waiting for an opportune moment, easily pulls the gun out of the fortification and dashes it to the ground. A comrade approaches and appears to lob a grenade into the emplacement, but the scene cuts away before it detonates. The audience, therefore, can know the enemy was vanquished but are not required to watch him suffer, eliminating the danger of humanizing the devilish foe.

The facelessness of the enemy until the final minutes of the film serves to further dehumanize and de-emphasize him. Our first clues as to his identity come during the sequence in which enemy tanks make their way down a road. The camera assumes the perspective of the driver of one tank, and disembodied voices babble in English. The audience is not given an overabundance of time in the enemy's shoes, however, as he is quickly dispatched by Sarukichi and Wankichi, who have been hiding nearby. Sarukichi tears the hatch open and, using his bayonet, stabs toward the camera. Wankichi stabs at the same target with his rifle-bayonet, after which a grotesque, gangly caricature of a British soldier is shown bayoneted bloodlessly in the chest. The enemy's identity is hardly a surprise, however. The audience has been led to expect white-skinned humans as the target of Momotarō's assault since the flashback sequence.

That Sarukichi, wearing the rising sun headband, initiates the film's only on-screen kill is significant. In this capacity, Sarukichi acts as a proxy for all Japanese striking at a physical representation of the corrupt, devilish outside forces that stand in the way of the divine mandate. His actions lead Wankichi to follow suit, which, as we shall see, appears to have a significant effect on the dog sailor's character. After the symbolic slaying of the enemy, the film cuts abruptly to enemy headquarters, where chaos reigns. Some enemy soldiers scatter for the apparent safety of a hangar, while others scramble aimlessly. Those that flee off screen are confronted with a thunderous hail of gunfire, and we can infer that the cowardly enemy forces have been slaughtered.

In the next sequence, the flag that advances into the enemy base at the head of the Japanese assault represents the pacification of Onigashima. Once the influence of the sun has reached even the heart of the enemy's stronghold, he can no longer resist its awesome

power. Countless enemy soldiers stream from their headquarters, hands held high in surrender, white flag waving. Discarded weapons litter the ground, and as the enemies are taken into custody, we see that one has a prominent tattoo of a ship on his belly, a reference to the doom-bearing black ships of the flashback sequence. From this we know that the influence of the devilish enemy is at an end, disintegrated by the rays of the sun.

The surrender negotiations that take place immediately thereafter are modeled after the British surrender of Singapore as discussed earlier, but some additional elements worth discussing can be found. To begin, the enemy commanders are depicted as caricatures of White men crowned with the distinctive horns of the *oni*. Whereas the connection between marauding Europeans and Momotarō's traditional foes to this point in the film has been implicit, here the true nature of the enemy commanders is revealed, leaving no possibility for error: the British are not merely *like oni*; they *are oni*.

Additionally, although official photographs show the negotiations occurred in a windowless white-walled room, Momotarō's negotiation with the *oni* commanders takes place in a room featuring a window and a painting. The Japanese forces sit with their backs to the window, while the enemies place a painting of a structure to their backs. In having their backs to the open air and the sun, Momotarō and his troops appear to heed the warning voiced by Jinmu Tennō, who, when faced with military setbacks, surmised that attacking in the direction of the sun demonstrated disrespect for his divine ancestress and repositioned his forces to fight with the sun at their backs (Aston 113). The enemy, on the other hand, sit opposed to the sun, their backs to an artificial rendering of an artificial thing. Thus, we understand that the *oni* commanders act in defiance of the natural order and cannot hope to triumph.

Interestingly, Sarukichi and Wankichi, who are seated at Momotarō's table, are both depicted in rising sun headbands. Previous sequences showed only Sarukichi among the original four main characters wearing the headband, and this appeared connected to his having experienced a spiritist revelation. Wankichi's participation in the dispatch of the one enemy killed on screen, then, appears to have prompted his own transcendence. The bear is present in the scene, but he does not wear a headband. This appears to suggest he is not wholly actualized; as a cipher for the audience, the bear's status is not fixed. He is whatever the viewer is, depending on the state of that individual's spirit.

### **Scene 13: Children of Destiny**

The final scene of the film returns the audience to the Japanese village featured in the opening scenes. Though only about one minute in length, this sequence perspectivizes the entire feature. The village children with whom the main characters interacted early in the film are now seen practicing exercises they saw the paratroopers perform. While most of the children perform these feats enthusiastically, Santa shows hesitation and is sent to the back of the line. He is additionally reluctant to jump from the top of a tree from which the other children jump. In his moment of doubt, however, an older child shouts up to him in encouragement, and Santa gathers up his courage and leaps, landing on a map of North America drawn in chalk on the ground. With a righteous scowl, he delivers a few vigorous stomps to the enemy homeland and races to catch up to the older children as the camera pans up to reveal that this, too, has transpired in the shadow of Mount Fuji.

If Momotarō's prophesied liberation of the South Seas from the *oni*/British has not suggested to the audience that the fantasy of the screen translates directly into the policy of the nation, Santa's last challenge at the tree makes this explicit. Just like the four

sailors, the children are invested in the great mission. By training to be like the sailors and overcoming fear, the children will in turn actualize their own identities and contribute to the national mission enabling even the homeland of the enemy to fall. That all of this happens under the watchful presence of Mount Fuji suggests as well that the children in pursuing this path fall under divine protection.

Additionally, should the bear sailor's actualization experiences fail to provide the young audience with a model for how they might attain such a state, Santa's progress provides a final alternate route. The young brother of Sarukichi has come a great distance from his first appearance when, enslaved by selfish whimsy and passion, he nearly lost his life. He is now, at the end of the film, dedicated, even if fearful, and his final triumph over the tree suggests that even if we do not see his eventual fate, Santa will distinguish himself. He, like his brother, is party to a glorious destiny in which the audience can share, if only they will follow the examples they have seen. In so doing, the film promises, they will unify myth, folklore, history, and the pure self in such a way that no foe, no matter how fearsome, will ever triumph over them.

## CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND IMPACT

In the analysis detailed in previous chapters, I have explored the concept of the visual ideograph and, specifically, the manner in which networks of visual ideographs are employed in *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei* to direct and reinforce notions of Japaneseness. This has been framed within the context of the geography, language, myth, folklore, and history of the Japanese state, and it has likewise considered the effects of global politics and foreign policy on the cultivation of ideology from these components. From the analysis conducted, the following conclusions, implications, limitations, potential impacts on scholarship, and areas for further research have been identified.

### Conclusions

First, identity in *Umi no shinpei* is performative in nature. Japaneseness is limited by the individual's adherence to certain behavioral norms, to include speaking the Japanese language, dressing in a recognizably Japanese manner, and participating in the Japanese national mission, the expansion of the divinely granted *tenjō mukyū* mandate to encompass the entire earth in compliance with the *hakkō ichiu* declaration made by Jinmu Tennō. This act itself implies psychological investment in the orthodox body of Japanese national founding narratives. Furthermore, full actualization as Japanese is not granted by mere coincidence of birth. The true Japanese, in accordance with High and Dower, must undergo a spiritual transformation experience wherein personal desires and concerns are subsumed by the awesome nature of the national mission. In the film, this process is

reflected in the development of Sarukichi and the bear sailor, both of whom achieve the moment of transcendence and actualization on screen.

The antithesis of Japaneseness is foreignness, portrayed in two major ways: the exotic, charming nature of friendly, ultimately redeemable foreigners who can be recruited to the national mission and the rapacious, demonic nature of hostile, unredeemable foreigners who must either be neutralized or destroyed through force of arms in order to guarantee the safety of Japanese spaces and the continuance of the national mission. The islanders encountered by Momotarō and his troops typify the former, while the *oni* who stand as proxies for the British exemplify the latter.

Ultimately, however, foreignness is not considered an acceptable fixed status in the film. As the national mission is to expand Japanese space to encompass the entire earth, and as Japanese space, being divinely mandated, is a type of pure space, foreignness is by definition impurity. The divide between pure inner spaces and corrupt outer spaces, as the epistemological dichotomy that informs the film, dictates that foreignness must be dispelled either through the conversion of foreign identities to Japanese identities through peaceful means or the neutralization or destruction of foreign threats through martial means. Both the national founding narratives that chronicle the establishment and expansion of Japanese space under semidivine heroes and folktales such as the story of Momotarō connect this dichotomy to the natural and divine order.

Liminality in the film is ideally a one-way street. The liminalization of Japanese individuals is never addressed, and according to the dominant ideology of the times is tantamount to corruption. A Japanese character assuming a foreign affect, then, is performative foreignness, the conversion of the self into the enemy. The film therefore



focuses only on the process of Japanization, which is achieved by replicating the conditions for performativity as they exist in the home islands: language, behavior, and thinking. This is universally depicted in the film as purification and uplift: the natural order of the world is restored and a peaceful future for all is guaranteed.

The clearest example of the perceived benefit of this policy in the film is the liminalization imposed upon the islanders. Their assistance of Momotarō and his troops furthers the national mission, which is in turn the fulfillment of a divine prophecy that results in the islanders' release from bondage. This binds their primitive cosmology to that of the Japanese national mission in a permanently subordinate role and dictates that their future interaction with the Japanese characters will assume a similar cast. While the final results of the islanders' transformation are never shown in the film, if assumptions rooted in the film's ideology are followed to their logical conclusion, there can be no doubt that the islanders will come to embrace the ways of their Japanese liberators.

The success of these complex assumptions about identity in *Umi no shinpei* depends upon audience response to the network of ideographs in which the pure inner/corrupt outer dichotomy is rooted. When visually rendered, these ideographs prompt immediate, emotion-oriented, nonverbal responses to the principles they represent, but only so long as members of the film's audience are properly acclimatized to the ideographs and the ideological positions they solicit. In the case of *Umi no shinpei's* primarily juvenile audience, government-mandated textbook readers and children's popular fiction, especially future war fiction are the chief vehicles through which the narratives, symbols, and images that constitute the major ideographs of the Japanese state ideology are conveyed. The textbooks' slow, deliberate progression from folklore to myth

to current events and their treatment of children, folk heroes, gods, sovereigns, soldiers, things-Japanese, and the world outside Japan with equanimity construct a network of interdependent images that work together to reinforce a model of the universe contextualized and made purposeful by the injection of external threats.

Future war fiction, which gained prominence early in the twentieth century, applied those ideographic networks introduced in educational material to fanciful scenarios of war between Japan and a host of villainous enemies, typically Western powers such as the United States. Through these portrayals of the national mission, the exemplary conduct of the Japanese war hero, and the despicable nature of the foreign enemy, young people could come to readily apply ideographic networks rooted largely in myth and folklore to current events, a tendency naturally applied to *Umi no shinpei* and, I contend, relied upon by the film's writers. In short, prior conditioning created an environment and an audience highly likely to respond to the film's network of symbols and narrative framework governing identity in a manner favorable to the state's late-war agenda as it prepared for an inevitable final confrontation with the Allies.

Upon this ideological foundation informed by myth, folklore, educational texts, popular fiction, the Japanese Pacific War film culture emerged. In large part, the film industry of the late war period was heavily controlled by the government and served as a vehicle through which state policy could be disseminated. One of the primary agents of that policy in the film world was the ideal Japanese hero, a guileless, sincere embodiment of the national spirit who, through his spiritual purity, enabled the accomplishment of the national mission, sometimes at the cost of his own life.

This hero's status as ur-Japanese, however, was no consequence of mere nativity.

He had to undergo a transcendent experience that fused him spiritually to the nation, allowing him to actualize his true nature. In *Umi no shinpei*, this process of spiritual development and ultimate self-realization is represented in the progress of the characters, including the inept and childlike bear, who functions as a cipher for the juvenile audience. Through the fusion of these elements, *Umi no shinpei* suggests to its audience a pathway to spiritual perfection and even military victory, even on the eve of surrender.

### **Implications**

Ultimately, the nature of the ideographic networks that power identity formation in *Umi no shinpei* suggests a number of compelling implications. First, that the ideographs in play in the film, while informed by and invested in state ideology, derive from far more ancient, fundamental assumptions about the nature of Japaneseness and the process by which foreign individuals and spaces become Japanized suggests that identity formation in wartime children's media may depend far less upon the controlling hand of the state than previously surmised. Instead, the state's ideological scaffolding appears to depend upon the ease with which established narratives can be adapted and re-imagined in modern contexts by tapping pre-existing assumptions about identity.

By invoking those assumptions via compelling visual ideographs, the epistemological scaffolding common to the founding myth and the Momotarō narrative is rendered transferable into modern contexts in that it provides a familiar framework by which such situations can be interpreted. Consequently, the state of affairs in Greater East Asia during the Pacific War easily becomes a contemporary proxy for the formative conflicts of the mythic foundation of the Japanese state. The Japanese assume the role of gods and culture-givers, friendly peoples become the submissive tribes of the primal

earth, and resistant elements become unruly tribes and gods in rebellion against the divine order. Once this transfer is achieved, identity can be artificially keyed to obedience to state policy regarding those conflicts. In the film, for instance, the Japanese characters in many ways are known to be Japanese precisely because they participate in the national mission in set roles. To fail to perform thusly constitutes a failure to be Japanese.

Analyzing the way in which the ideographs present in the film inform and are informed by the external stimulus of state policy and ideology permits an understanding of the means by which national identities are cultivated. While it is clear, for instance, that the Imperial Japanese state made abundant use of the body of Shintō myth, Shintō and its narratives antedate the formation of the 1868 Meiji administration by centuries. Embedded in the canon of Shintō myth, including the narrative of the national founding, therefore, is an accumulation of assumptions, emotional associations, mores, and values, about identity to which the state could not help but attend. Thus, state attempts to subvert or exploit myth are successful only so long as they preserve the essence of the cosmology that typifies those narratives. Simply put, narratives must remain recognizable in order to have the desired effect. If state-sanctioned iterations fail to attend to vital components of the vertical lineage of key ideographs, the narrative will no longer elicit its typical response from audiences. By examining what elements carry over between original material texts composed by state organs and sanctioned authors of national ideology, it is possible to arrive at some sense of what is fundamental and what is contrived.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Admissibly, this study was limited in a variety of ways and can in no sense be considered exhaustive. Primary limitations most significantly concentrated in the realm

of scope. Due to the limited size and nature of the study, only select elements of the overall audiovisual presentation of *Umi no shinpei* could be examined. However, these elements were themselves inescapably informed by elements such as music, dialogue, and the treatment of detailed elements of the visual presentation such as landscape and the depiction of realistic military equipment. The film also appears to draw significantly on other films of the period, an additional level of intertextual connectivity which could have significant implications for the ultimate effect and meaning of the work. The degree to which symbolic networks and associations of visual images interact with these elements could only be briefly suggested in passing in this study, whereas a study of expanded scope could endeavor to incorporate them to a more appropriate degree.

The study was further limited by the availability of resources given project time, scope, and budget. Some materials which could have contributed to the discussion and analysis of the film are rare or otherwise difficult to access or acquire. Some would require physical presence at distant domestic and overseas archives in order to utilize materials not readily available through inter-library loan. Other points of analysis would benefit greatly from personal communication and investigation only possible given the time and opportunity to conduct long-term field research in Japan. Because such things were not able to be obtained for this study, some elements of the study rely upon secondary sources and meta-analyses to a greater degree than would be ideal. Given access to these materials and the opportunity for personal interviews with relevant experts and extended field research, the study could more accurately and exhaustively explore the full extent of the film's intersecting ideographic networks.

Finally, the study is limited by the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic background of

the researcher. While I endeavor to exhaustively explore the material presented in the film, I remain a cultural and linguistic outsider, and so it is likely that my perception of the film is incomplete. Given more time and access to amiable native experts, I could likely improve the depth of the analysis presented here, but even in that case my perspective will always remain in some way that of an outsider. Thus, this study cannot attempt to represent native perspectives; it can only report intersections of data and patterns able to be apprehended by non-Japanese scholars. That it is an obligatorily outside voice, however, does not constitute its being resigned to irrelevancy. Paired with native studies of similar materials, which are likewise subject to their own limitations, the outside view can provide a more comprehensive view of the subject matter, leading ultimately to better understanding for all.

### **Areas for Further Research**

Given the opportunity for further research in this area, I would ideally pursue the following elements. First, I would prefer to extend the detailed analysis of the film to the film's soundtrack, to include both music and dialogue. Both of these elements contain a wealth of additional information and symbolic context that was only briefly mentioned in this study. For instance, the variation and repetition of the film's title march, the use of military bugle calls with specific meaning, and the characterization of the film's redeemable foreigners through musical variation are all critical to the overall effect of the work. Dialogue, too provides invaluable insight into projected perceptions concerning identity in the film. As the film is at once a verbal, musical, and visual text, it is only fitting that any comprehensive analysis includes each of these elements.

Additionally, I would like to compare the composition of *Umi no shinpei* to other

animated films of the period, both those produced in Japan and those produced elsewhere, especially in the United States. Exploring the degree to which fixed visual representations of identity carry over to other examples of early Shōwa animated film in Japan could provide an expanded sample group capable of allowing the formation of a working theory of the visual rhetoric of identity in Japanese animation of the period. Comparison to other countries' animated films, especially American animation, could allow a contrastive rhetorical examination of the phenomena explored in this study.

As the film appears to draw heavily upon the influence of live-action films and government produced media of the period, a more extensive exploration of these films would benefit understanding of not only *Umi no shinpei*, but Japanese Pacific War film on the whole. Specifically, the intersections and divergences present in adult and children's media could provide additional insight into which elements of *Umi no shinpei* and the relevant live-action films are considered age-specific material and which elements constitute points of ideological universality.

Due to the apparent extensive influence of educational materials on the film, an in-depth analysis of the content, both visual and textual, of all twelve volumes of *Shōgaku kokugo tokuhon* would benefit the understanding of children's film and literature of the period substantially. Moreover, because *Shōgaku kokugo tokuhon* was revised four times between its initial issuance and its final iteration in the latter years of the Pacific War, an analysis of the shifts that took place in the textbooks over time could provide insight into shifting sociopolitical values as well as those elements that remained constant throughout the texts' use.

Due to limitations noted above, this study relied exclusively upon secondary

sources for its understanding of children's future war fiction in Imperial Japan. I would prefer to conduct an examination of primary documents, where accessible and available, particularly concerning the invocation of the ideographs that dominate *Umi no shinpei*. If such an analysis and comparative study can be conducted, the extent to which such patterns may or extend into popular textual fiction and the potential shared symbolic genealogy of the narratives can be documented in the English language, where it appears such work is limited.

Finally, in light of the immense popularity of Japanese popular culture in the Western world today, I would like to examine successful postwar *anime* and *manga* franchises with extensive followings in both the West and Japan in order to ascertain which elements of the epistemological framework represented in *Umi no shinpei*, if any, survive and to determine whether such elements constitute ideological artifacts of Imperial state ideology, the persistence of traditional cultural assumptions about identity and space, or a liminal third classification in which the trappings of wartime state ideology have, to some degree, become fused to the ideographs mobilized by the state in films like *Umi no shinpei*.

Provided the opportunity in the future to explore these elements, I believe the concepts briefly addressed in this study can be far more exhaustively explored, leading to a better understanding of the ways in which popular culture, visual media, tradition, and ideology come together to direct the formation and perception of identity. Such a study, while it might not constitute the doomsday-inducing cataloging of the Japanese spirit envisioned by Tsumura Hideo, would contribute to the understanding of the narrative worlds we make for ourselves and the means by which we inhabit them.



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