The public perception of Japan’s place in the postwar world, observed Karen M. Fraser in *Photography and Japan*, was informed by a ‘single photograph’.¹ Six weeks after the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the totality of Japan’s defeat was signalled by an image taken in late September 1945 by Lieutenant Gaetano Faillace, a member of the American Camera Corps. The occasion was the historic first meeting of General Douglas MacArthur, the supreme commander of the Allied Occupation, with Emperor Hirohito. According to MacArthur’s biographer, Hirohito was ‘trembling’ when he arrived at the US Embassy in Tokyo, close by the imperial palace; the general tried to calm him by proffering an American cigarette, which was accepted with a shaky hand.² The diminutive emperor, swaddled in formal frock coat, cravat and striped pants, stands stiffly by the American, just two feet to his right but a good foot taller (see Figure 4.1). By contrast, McArthur is the at-home host, unsmiling but disarmingly relaxed, nonchalant even, dressed casually in khaki, hands in his pockets. It was the only time during the six years of the Occupation that MacArthur deigned to be photographed with any Japanese, let alone the emperor. He made sure Faillace’s photograph was published in Japanese newspapers the next day. One devastating image had reduced Japan’s living god to a nervous, slightly absurd visitor in his own country—a country now ruled by the US with

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Figure 4.1. Lt Gaetano Faillace, Emperor Hirohito and General MacArthur, at Their First Meeting, at the U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, 27 September 1945.
Source: United States Army Photograph.
help from the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), made up of Australians, British, New Zealanders and Indians, of which the Australians provided the leadership and the largest contingent.

Perhaps Fraser is overstating the influence of one purportedly definitive image; nevertheless, it is true to say that few military events have been as marked by photography as the Occupation of Japan. Just as the predatory ‘chopper’ is a symbol of the Vietnam War, the essence of the Occupation is represented by an iconic material object, the camera. As an observer quipped in 1949, ‘the Army of Occupation is extensively armed—with Kodaks, Leicas and Speed Graphics’.³ Perhaps this was especially true of the Australians, many of whom were on their first overseas trip and determined to document the experience. In the permanent display dedicated to the Occupation in the Australian War Memorial, the event is fittingly represented by the iconography of tourism, including a suitcase, a leave pass, a battered booklet entitled Japanese in 3 Weeks and a few conventional Japanese souvenirs such as a black-ribbed Agfa Box 45, used in Japan by the Australian BCOF serviceman Frank Lawrence. It is an appropriate collection of relics, for the Australians were relentless sightseers and ardent photographers. Off duty (and sometimes on it), they rarely ventured anywhere without a camera slung over their shoulders.

As the Occupation wore on, the chances were that more and more of their cameras were made locally. Photography was a booming enterprise in Occupied Japan. The local camera and optical industries grew quickly, catering in the main to the influx of foreigners—the Americans alone numbered up to 350,000. At up to 20,000, the Australian contingent was tiny by comparison, though still a significant number. Germany, the previous dominant power in photographic equipment, was in ruins, with much of what was left of its industry located in the eastern zone, dominated by Russia. Established Japanese camera companies such as Nikon and Canon took advantage of financial and technical support by the Americans to meet the market for locally made copies of German models, a market boosted in 1950 by the arrival of a large press corps stopping off in Japan en route to the new war that had broken out in

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Figure 4.2. William Harry Freeman, *Members of BCOF Taking Photographs of ‘Geisha Girls’*, Kyoto, August 1947.

Source: AWM 133125.
Korea. Sightseeing and photography became inextricably intertwined, one activity feeding off the other. The dedication to taking pictures was habitual and, in many cases, slightly obsessive. One Australian paid homage to the activity by taking an image of a Kodak processing store in the town of Bofu, a major BCOF air force station. Many servicemen took photographs of their comrades and were themselves caught in the act of taking pictures, or awaiting the next shot.

The flurry of photographic activity in Occupied Japan became a subject of choice for the official cohort of photographers assigned to cover what was a unique episode in Australian military history—the first time Australia had formally occupied a nation defeated in war. Photographers working for the Directorate of Public Relations (DPR) attached to both the army and the air force made attractive images designed to appeal to a sometimes sceptical public back home, while the Military History Section (MHS) documented the Occupation for posterity, with an eye to the historical record and an official history that never saw the light of day. Together, their pictures often reveal a kind of professional self-reflexivity, as in the DPR’s Douglas Lee’s image of army photographers shooting the farewell parade for the Australian commander of BCOF, Lieutenant General Robertson, in Kure in November 1951. In August 1947, Harry Freeman of the MHS photographed soldiers in turn photographing ‘geisha girls’ (so says the caption) in Kyoto (see Figure 4.2). The image is telling, for in a sense the Occupation was not only officially documented by photography, but also by the presentation of an almost absurdly redundant view of an untouched, timeless Japan that deflected from the damage the pitiless Allied bombing had wrought on the country.

Most members of the official Australian photographic cohort, including leading practitioners such as Alan Queale of the MHS and Phillip Hobson of the DPR, came fresh from the military that had just fought in the conflict. Several were still on active service and answerable to

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4 See Robert White, Discovering Cameras, 1945–1965 (London: Shire Discovering, 1968), 13. Marked ‘Made in Occupied Japan’, cameras figured prominently in the nation’s export trade in the immediate postwar period, garnering foreign currency and stimulating the economy. The importance of the camera industry to Japan’s economic recovery is illustrated by the section dedicated to postwar Japan in Tokyo’s Edo-Tokyo Museum prominently featuring a Konica 35 mm camera.

5 Frank Lees, photograph of Kodak store, Bofu. AWM P06206.012.


7 Lee AWM LEEJ0013.

8 Freeman AWM133125.
a command that tended to see the Occupation as the last phase of a long military campaign, they maintained a deep dislike of the Japanese.\textsuperscript{9} Their professional obligations did not easily accommodate a nuanced personal response to Japan or new ways of picturing the country, despite the process of radical transformation they were there to record. They remained tied to the framing of a traditional Japan that was both bucolic and ultra-refined, and above all photogenically alluring—the Japan, indeed, of postcards of geisha and teahouses. This was ‘the land of the picturesque’ delighted in by the Australian traveller James Hingston in the 1870s, who likened the place to a pre-modern version of Britain ‘in the days of old, when there were maypoles and morris-dancers, and caps with bells to them’.\textsuperscript{10} It was a fanciful vision way back then, in the initial phases of Japan’s process of modernisation in the early Meiji era; it was even more outmoded after the ravages of the recent war, which scarred the country physically and affected it socially and culturally.

The dependence on redundant imagery of a pristine Japan derived, in part, from the established institutions of Australian war photography. The DPR had sprung from the wartime Department of Information, whose pictures of soldiers on leave or training in the Middle East had drawn on the tourist and ethnographic aspects of photographs of their predecessors in Oriental locales in WWI.\textsuperscript{11} However, it also reveals the persistent influence of the decorative Japonisme that swept Australia in waves from the 1880s to the 1930s, which distinguished the ‘real’, significantly feminine and childlike Japan, from the modernising and militaristic nation that Australia went to war against.\textsuperscript{12} This idealised Japan emerged most blatantly in the pictorial motifs of tourism. Both before and after WWI, during which Japan was an Australian ally, the Sydney shipping and trading company Burns Philp used photographs of geisha, temples and sumptuous mountainscapes to illustrate its in-house publication \textit{Picturesque Travel}, hoping to lure customers to its cruises to

\begin{itemize}
\item[9] The Treaty of Peace with Japan was not signed until September 1951 and did not come into force until the following year.
\item[11] See Shaune Lakin, \textit{Contact: Photographs from the Australian War Memorial Collection} (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 2006), 102, 105. The Department of Information originated in the pre-WWI Department of External Affairs, one of whose roles was to produce attractive photographic images of Australia to encourage tourism to the country.
\end{itemize}
Japan and the Orient aboard the Japanese steamship company Nippon Yusen Kaisha. In this, they anticipated the propaganda of the Japanese National Board of Tourist Industry in the 1930s, which attempted to encourage foreign tourism as an aggressively expansionary Japan sought to convey a sympathetic impression of itself to the world. A ‘carefully cultivated image of picturesqueness’ marked the promotional booklets produced by the board and even the sophisticated photo journal *Nippon*, produced in several European languages for foreign consumption, which was anxious to present Japan as a technologically advanced trading nation the equal of any in the West.

Many of these tourist trailblazers to Japan would have followed the advice of the Australian photographer Nevil A. Tooth, in a piece on Japan published in *Harrington’s Photographic Journal* in 1911: ‘take a camera’. WWII temporarily halted this early tourist traffic to Japan and destroyed the idealised country Australian travellers had coveted. Conditioned to see Japan in certain ways, BCOF photographers sought to validate a set of images that the war had made obsolete and that the Occupation was designed to revise. They documented a force charged with rebuilding Japan, but uncomfortable with the social and political volatility reconstruction had unleashed. An act of recreation, of remaking feudal Japan into a self-reliant and pluralistic modern nation, was visually realised as a regressive exercise in control.

The Allied mission in Japan, led by the imperious MacArthur, lasted twice as long as the Pacific War that preceded it. For all its benevolent modernity in facilitating Japan’s transition from militarism to a functioning democracy, it was an enterprise that was both anachronistic and neo-colonialist. BCOF was one of the last collective armed gestures of a moribund empire as Britain began its retreat from Asia. In noting its historically familiar exercise of the white conqueror’s privilege over the conquered Asiatic, both American and Japanese historians have likened the Occupation to the British Raj in India. John Dower, in *Embracing Defeat*, applied Rudyard Kipling’s euphemism for imperial hegemony, labelling it ‘the last immodest exercise in the colonial conceit

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13 The first issue of *Picturesque Travel* appeared in 1911 and the last in 1925. Burns Philp pioneered the Pacific cruise and the packaging of tours in Asia for Australians, monopolising the trade for decades.


known as “the white man’s burden”.

In Occupied Japan, the ‘white man’s burden’ was one borne lightly, for the country lay prostrate and apparently accommodating. The camera became both an instrument of power and a neo-colonial medium of framing places and peoples, and the Occupation itself a new paradigm of the historical nexus of photographic appropriation, tourism and military colonisation.

Atomic Tourists

Japan was in ruins when the first Australian Occupationnaires arrived in early 1946. Sixty of its cities had been pulverised and incinerated by a saturation bombing campaign that included the prodigious use of napalm. Up to 100,000 citizens of Tokyo perished in a single night in March 1945, ‘scorched and boiled and baked to death’, in the phrase of the campaign’s chief strategist Major General Curtis (‘Bombs Away’) Le May. The postwar homeless numbered more than 8 million, people were dying of malnutrition and orphans scrounged in gutted buildings and blackened streets. Prostitution was the only thing to thrive in the wreckage. From April 1946, Australians settled into a cluster of camps in and around the heavily bombed Inland Sea port of Kure, just down the coast from Hiroshima. The following year saw the arrival of the wives and children of many servicemen, housed in purpose-built residential colonies, amply serviced by Japanese domestic staff—a practice that reminded the visiting Australian travel writer Frank Clune of the British garrison towns in Imperial India.

Yet, the manifest misery and squalor of postwar Japan hardly registers in the official Australian photography. In 1948, BCOF’s Australian commander-in-chief, Lieutenant-General Horace Robertson, presented

16 John Dower, Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Aftermath of World War II (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), 23. Written in response to the American colonisation of the Philippines, a prize of the Spanish–American War, Kipling’s landmark poem ‘The White Man’s Burden’ (1899) urged the United States to take up the noble cause of empire formerly borne by European nations, most notably by the British Raj in Imperial India. The reference is singularly apt, for the first military governor of American-occupied Manila was none other than General Arthur MacArthur, father of Douglas. The Japanese historian of the Occupation, Eiji Takemae, drew a similar parallel with the British Raj. See Eiji Takemae, The Allied Occupation of Japan, trans. Robert Ricketts and Sebastian Swann (New York: Continuum, 2003), 75.


18 Frank Clune, Ashes of Hiroshima (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1950), 56.
eight handsome, personally inscribed photograph albums to the serving Australian Prime Minister, Ben Chifley.\textsuperscript{19} The albums contained the work of the photographers attached to the DPR; one can assume that this was considered a representative collection of its endeavours. Somewhat alarmingly for the photographic record of a force entrusted with the serious mission of assisting the Americans in neutering Japan as a future threat and turning it into a responsible ally, it resembles a highly polished selection of the prized photographs of a family on its dream trip abroad. Servicemen are revealed in several stylised touristic poses, such as living it up in glamorous leave resorts, playing golf with snow-capped Fujisan looming majestically in the background, and negotiating the famous stepping stones across the pond at the Heian shrine in Kyoto (trying not to drop their cameras into the water). The wives and children of BCOF personnel are also there, picnicking and cavorting on the beaches of the Inland Sea, having the time of their lives.

One photograph in the collection, less staged than the others, stands out. It reveals a slouch-hatted young Australian ‘digger’ on leave in Tokyo’s Ginza, shopping at one of the street markets that cropped up in Japanese cities in the early postwar years (see Figure 4.3). Trying his hand at an accordion, the occupying soldier is the tourist consumer self-consciously partaking of the passing pleasures that come his way, in an environment in which such things are his for the taking. Meanwhile, the Japanese bric-a-brac vendor, clothed in military remnants of the late war, stares vaguely in the direction of the camera, bristling and humiliated, awaiting, though not indulging, the Australian’s pleasure.\textsuperscript{20} The DPR photographer has inadvertently identified the nature of human exchange in Occupied Japan, in which military domination and control extended beyond the subjugation of a people defeated in war, penetrating and corrupting all aspects of human interaction.

\textsuperscript{19} Photographs of BCOF clubs, churches, leave resorts and hospitals, photographed and compiled by Public Relations Section, HQ, BCOF, Japan. 30446636 PIC Albums 525–528, 530–533. See esp. album 528.

The imagery of tourism dominated Australian photography of the Occupation from virtually the first Australian landfall in Japan. In March 1946, a few weeks after Australian troops had started arriving in Kure, Australia’s longest-running weekly picture magazine, the Australasian, published an extensive photo story trumpeting this historic event. Taken by Neil Town, the staff photographer for the Australasian while still enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force, the images illustrated an article with the title ‘Australia Is There’, reminiscent of the jingoistic bluster that attended national participation in the remote theatres of WWI.21 In the main photograph, a group of Australian soldiers saunter out of a destroyed Hiroshima shrine, via the torii, or entrance gate (see Figure 4.4). Though the caption does not identify it, this was the

21 ‘Australia Will Be There’ was a popular patriotic song written in response to Australia’s entry into WWI. It was written in 1915 by the songwriter Walter Skipper Francis.
only torii of three local ‘Gokuku’ shrines to survive the blast of 6 August 1945. Gokuku shrines are dedicated as places of worship honouring those who have died in war; the Hiroshima version commemorated local victims of the civil war in the late 1860s between the Tokugawa shogunate and the imperial forces. The torii symbolically marks the transition from the profane to the sacred—or the other way round if one is exiting. It would be asking too much for this information to be conveyed to the unknowing Australian audience. Yet, at the same time, Town’s image captures the mix of arrogance and blithe ignorance with which the Australians went to Japan. The diggers had arrived in Japan and were in command; the sacred torii is turned into a triumphal arch.
The photograph conjures something else besides military swagger. The group of soldiers look like tourists in khaki; as the caption states, they appear to be on a ‘sightseeing tour’. The formal architecture of the torii throws the casualness of the Australians into relief; even for the notoriously ‘unmilitary’ Australian soldiers, they are well out of step. In the text accompanying the pictures, co-written by the noted war correspondent (and future eminent novelist) George Johnston, who had covered the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay the previous September, Neil Town insisted the Australians were ‘not in Japan as tourists’, but understood ‘the serious international implications of their tasks’. Yet, Town also talked about soldiers in Hiroshima ‘scratching through the debris looking for souvenirs’. This unappealing image is supported by one of Town’s own photographs showing two Australian soldiers doing just that (and photographing themselves doing it), published a couple of weeks earlier in the Melbourne daily broadsheet the Argus, the stablemate of the Australasian, for whom he also provided pictures. The day before, the Argus ran what must have been a disconcerting picture to civilian Australians in 1946—Town’s image of a soldier being fitted out in a kimono in a Japanese store, attended by two admiring Japanese female assistants.22

Neil Town was not alone among newspaper photographers and journalists in drawing attention to the touristic aspects of the enterprise. Recruitment literature exploited the imagery of travel to lure men into the occupying force in the first place, and the press coverage played up the sightseeing nature of the event.23 The ‘FIRST PICTURES OF AUSTRALIAN TROOPS IN JAPAN’, unveiled on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald in late February 1946, revealed a posse of smiling soldiers promenading across a Hiroshima bridge and buying fruit from local vendors.24 Around the same time, the respected journalist Massey Stanley, writing in the Daily Telegraph, recommended the tour of duty to members of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) as a chance to visit ‘fascinating’ Japan, ‘one of the loveliest countries on earth’, where soldiers could readily access ‘an abundance of supplies and luxuries beyond the dreams’ of civilian Australia.25 Stanley’s article was titled ‘AIF

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23  See Prue Torney-Parlicki, Somewhere in Asia: War, Journalism, and Australia’s Neighbours 1941–75 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000), 139.
24  Sydney Morning Herald, 19 February 1946, 1.
Should Like Japan’. As if to prove its validity, a photographic feature on the Occupation published in July 1946 in Pix—a reliable outlet for propaganda pictures during the Occupation as in the war—reveals the female proprietor of a Japanese hotel on the island of Shikoku bowing deeply before two Australian military visitors. Accompanying pictures show Australians’ attempts with chopsticks, being entertained by geisha, disporting themselves in a hot tub and visiting a local castle.26

These pleasures and privileges were enacted in the shadow of Hiroshima. The city exercised a somewhat perverse fascination for the Australians. Partly this was due to proximity, for Hiroshima was quite literally down the road. As well, the city was sensationally topical and many Australians made a beeline for the place—its nuclear notoriety made it a must see on the tour of duty. On day trips or family outings, they went there heedless of the potential risk, for the official guidebook Know Japan provided to the troops never once mentioned the word ‘radiation’. By 1946, the fledgling beginnings of a tourism industry were already in evidence in Hiroshima. Bomb debris was being peddled to tourists, mostly household items remoulded in the tremendous heat caused by the explosion. Australians were enthusiastic clients, buying (or looting) pieces of rubble from around the hypocentre of the explosion on 6 August 1945, ground zero, to take back home.

‘The damage is far greater than any photographs can show’, wrote the first foreigner to report from the devastated city, the Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett, in early September 1945. Burchett was trying to convey the colossal material damage and the suffering of the survivors, who died ‘mysteriously and horribly’.27 In fact, the photographs taken by Australians say a great deal about the death of a city and its rebirth. Equally importantly, they provide a self-reflexive view of the way Australians perceived postwar Japan. Photographing Hiroshima, more than any other site in the country, was the means through which they negotiated the ethical and perceptual confusions of an Occupation that was part indulgently vengeful and punitive and part an exercise in reconciliation and reconstruction.

26 Pix, 12 July 1947, 6–9. See also a feature on Australian servicemen enjoying themselves at the Kawana Hotel, ‘Aussies in Swank Japan Hotel’, Pix, 9 August 1947, 3–5.
27 Wilfred Burchett, ‘The Atomic Plague’, Daily Express, 5 September 1945, 1, quoted in Burchett, Shadows of Hiroshima (London: Verso, 1983), 34–36. Burchett’s report led to the enforcement of a cordon sanitaire around Hiroshima by the American occupying authority, enforced as much by the determination to keep prying eyes away from the city as by concern about visitors being exposed to radiation.
In distant Australia, relief at the end of the war was tempered by inarticulate trepidation at the power the science of mass destruction had unleashed.\(^{28}\) Photography filled a representational vacuum. Members of the Australian advance party of BCOF were struck dumb by the sight of Hiroshima upon their arrival in the country in February 1946. The men ‘had no word to describe it, which is unusual for Australian soldiers’, stated a brief report published in the Melbourne Argus.\(^{29}\) The Argus article is dwarfed by photographs taken by the newspaper’s staff photographer. These include a panorama of the extensive damage in the centre of the city, highlighting the skeletal structure of what was to become the iconic symbol of both Hiroshima and the nuclear age itself, the A-Bomb Dome; another wide-angle shot of the bombed harbour at Kure; and a carefully contrived counter to the images of destruction—a scene of a genial Australian soldier interacting with adoring Japanese women and children. In the publicly circulated photography of the early days of the Occupation, the military might of the conquering force was balanced by an imagery of benignity. The Allies had won the war with ruthless technological efficiency and were now rebuilding Japan, helping it to mend its militaristic ways and nurturing its future. In one photograph (see Figure 4.5), a group of crisply uniformed diggers stroll past the A-Bomb Dome with a conqueror’s cocky self-assurance. The symbol of the city’s nuclear destruction serves as a decorative backdrop—the Australians’ eyes are firmly fixed ahead—and the picture suggests a force free of self-doubt or moral qualms.\(^{30}\)

The landscape of devastation surveyed in these early photographs from Hiroshima is pleasantly free of signs of human suffering. This was both calculated and shameless.\(^{31}\) Anxious not to disturb what it politely called ‘public tranquillity’, MacArthur’s headquarters imposed a strict code of press censorship in September 1945 as one of its first disingenuous acts to democratise totalitarian Japan. This systematically silenced the hibakusha, the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki who had lived to tell

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\(^{28}\) A Gallup Poll of Australians taken in September 1945 revealed that 83 per cent thought their use justified (‘Use of Atom Bomb on Japs Approved’, Australian Gallup Polls, nos 294–303 (September–October 1945)).

\(^{29}\) ‘New Era’, editorial, Courier Mail, 8 August 1945, 2; ‘Atom Bomb Ruin Staggers Australians in Japan’, Argus, 18 February 1946, 20.

\(^{30}\) See for example Argus Newspaper Collections of Photographs, State Library of Victoria, H98.104/563, H98.100/172.

the tale. Years later, the Hiroshima poet Sadako Kurihara remembered her frustration: ‘We were not allowed to write about the atomic bomb during the Occupation. We were not even allowed to say that we were not allowed to write about the atomic bomb’.

The portrayal of the misery inflicted by the bombings was strictly the privilege of the foreigner and could only be communicated to foreign audiences. *Hiroshima* (1946), by the American news correspondent John Hersey and first published as a single issue in the *New Yorker*, was enormously influential and was extracted in the service newspaper the *British Commonwealth Occupation*
News (BCON), which subtitled its story ‘A US Writer Tells What Really Happened at Hiroshima’. Of course, Hersey was not himself actually there; his book is built on interviews. It was forbidden for Japanese survivors to tell the story in their own words.

The ban applied to photographs and the written word. Ostensibly it was latent Japanese resentment that the Occupation wanted to contain. However, there was another, deeper reason; at stake was the prestige of the US and allies like Australia as a collective beacon of enlightened humanity. Documentary images of grotesquely burned corpses or massed remains would not do. Macarthur’s administration prohibited the publication of ground-level photographs capturing the horror of the immediate atomic aftermath, including the handful of pictures of Hiroshima taken by local photographer Yoshito Matsuhige and those of Nagasaki taken by Yosuke Yamahata. These harrowing images were not published in the US until Life magazine presented them in a photo spread in September 1952, after the implementation of the Peace Treaty formally ended the Occupation. In their official absence, explicit images of the destruction circulated on the black market in the form of postcards (with titles such as ‘Terrible Sight’), many of which were acquired by BCOF servicemen. Photographic imagery of the atomic bomb came to be monopolised by the uncensored sight of the mushroom cloud spiralling high into the sky, conveniently camouflage the horrors down below.

The MHS’s Alan Cuthbert produced several panoramic photographs of Hiroshima that provide an impressive visual register of the immensity of the nuclear devastation, but which obscure the intimacies of human suffering that pervaded the city. Soon after arriving in Japan in

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33 See ‘Death Came Swiftly With the Atomic Bomb—And Lingers’, BCON, 12 October 946, 5.
34 See ‘When the Atom Bomb Struck—Uncensored’, Life 33, no.13, 29 September 1952, 19–25. Some images, including those of Yamahata, had been published before the ban was introduced in September 1945 and a few appeared on rare occasions later, especially after it was relaxed in 1949. For example, the BCOF newspaper BCON published photographs of radiation and burn victims in March 1949. The suppression of the colour film footage of US military crews and black and white Japanese newsreel shot in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was even more draconian; the American military footage would remain hidden until the early 1980s and has never been fully aired publicly. See Greg Mitchell, ‘The Great Hiroshima Cover-up—And the Greatest Movie Never Made’, Japan Focus, 8 August 2011. apjjf.org/2011/9/31/Greg-Mitchell/3581/article.html.
February 1946, he photographed from the roof of the Chugoku Shinbun building, in which over 100 employees perished on the sunny morning of 6 August (see Figure 4.6). The elevated vantage point reveals a landscape virtually devoid of people, save a few anonymous figures walking along the crossroads and two small clusters of uniformed personnel in the foreground, by the shell of the Jesuit church that served Hiroshima’s small Christian congregation. Clinical and methodical, Cuthbert’s vista of absence and annihilation is reminiscent of the photographs taken by the ‘Physical Damage Division’ of the Strategic Bombing Survey (1946) commissioned by the US Government after the war to assess the effectiveness of the aerial campaigns in Germany and Japan, with
The panorama conveys an impersonal and even sanitised picture of the atom-bombed city; what it does not reveal is the pervasive misery and persistent sickness of a traumatised population.

By 1946, as Cuthbert’s image suggests, much of the debris had been cleaned up and the streets were neat and tidy; only picturesque ruins remain of what was Hiroshima. Its reconstruction was to be symbolic as well as pragmatic, and it was on the way to becoming the ‘place of pilgrimage for pacifists’ anticipated by Frank Clune in his travel book *Ashes of Hiroshima* (1950), the product of a trip to BCOF areas in

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The making of Hiroshima as a self-styled ‘Mecca for World Peace’ had begun almost immediately, with the formation in January 1946 of the Hiroshima Reconstruction Bureau. The creation of what we now know as ‘Peace Park’, with its host of commemorative facilities including Kenzo Tange’s museum, was just a few years away. In 1948 the slogan ‘No More Hiroshimas’ was applied to a local campaign to make the city a focus for the advocacy of world peace. It has stuck as an anti-nuclear catchcry ever since, paradoxically linking the city forever with the historical fact of its destruction.

‘No More Hiroshimas’ [sic] made its first appearance on a large banner at the second of the official annual Peace Festivals, held on the third anniversary of the bombing, 6 August 1948. Cuthbert’s colleague Alan Queale was on hand to document the event (see Figure 4.7). In what has since become a ritual at this solemn event, doves were sent fluttering into the summer sky, bells tolled and poets recited commemorative odes. BCOF Commander Horace Robertson, Gallipoli veteran and hero of the North African campaign in WWII, then strode to the podium. In 1946, Robertson had demonstrated his goodwill by offering the services of Australian engineers and town planners to rehabilitate Hiroshima as ‘a city dedicated to the idea of Peace’, a gesture vetoed by MacArthur. However, on this special day, he chose to tell the assembled citizens, many of them young children who would have lost beloved family members in the blast, that it was their own fault. The bomb was a ‘punishment’ handed to the city as ‘retribution’ for Japanese militarism. To emphasise his point, he had detailed a squadron of Mustang fighters to fly low over the ceremony—an ear-shattering reminder of the bolt from the blue exactly three years earlier. Perhaps that is what prompted the Japanese man standing on the jeep in Queale’s picture to point skyward. So much for ‘Peace’.

37 Frank Clune, Ashes of Hiroshima: A Post-War Trip to Japan and China (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1950), 103.
Spoils of War

Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in April 1952, soon after the historic decision to permit the Japanese brides of Australian servicemen to enter Australia, former BCOF serviceman Stephen Kelen dissociated these female ‘New Australians’ from the warmongers who had terrorised the region for years. ‘After all’, he wrote, ‘it is never women who wage wars—they only suffer, and pay for man’s folly no matter to what race or country they belong’.39 Kelen echoed the pervasive BCOF view that Japanese women and men were two distinctively different types, and that the females suffered unduly in a male-dominated society. To the MHS’s Alan Queale, the women were ‘shy, demure, very feminine’, the men ‘vicious, violent, ugly’.40

Yet, sympathy for Japanese women was not entirely disinterested. Japan was for the taking in every sense. Sexual rapacity was an abiding aspect of the Occupation, indulged in by members of all the Allied forces. Among Neil Town’s ‘first pictures’ of the arrival in Japan of the Australians in February 1946 was an image of two soldiers purchasing souvenirs. Their eyes are fixed firmly on two comely, sweetly smiling young women purveying the curios, and they cannot contain their smirks.41 Many Australian men considered Japan’s vulnerable, desperately penurious women among the spoils of war. As the BCOF interpreter Allan Clifton observed in his memoir *Time of Fallen Blossoms* (1950), most of the men on the first shipments of Occupationnaires had been fighting in the tropics, cut off from feminine society for long periods, and some ‘made no secret of what they wanted, or of their readiness, willingness and ability to recover lost ground’. Their indiscriminate desires are suggested by the generic name given the women in and around the Kure encampments—‘moose’, a bastardisation of the Japanese *musume*, or girl. The women, Clifton wrote, were ‘quarry in a great game hunt’.42 As the metaphor implies, this mating ritual was an essentially coercive form of human exchange, even when outright assault was not involved.

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40 Alan Queale, ‘Japan Diary’, *As You Were: A Cavalcade of Events with the Australian Services from 1788 to 1947* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial 1947), 190.
41 *Argus*, 19 February 1946, 1.
Fantasies of the prospect of available Japanese women had inspired some men to enlist in the first place. Early publicity images of local women fawning on Australian men were a calculated lure to recruitment into the force; this was one remove from what would now be called sex tourism. The DPR saw the sexual possibilities arising from occupying Japan. Phillip Hobson’s photograph (see Figure 4.8) of an unidentified but immensely self-satisfied Australian serviceman, draped as was customary with a camera, surrounded by a bevy of radiant Japanese women in traditional attire, is testimony to the way the tour of duty came to be seen and promoted by the military. Seven women for one man—a ratio guaranteed to make Australian friends back home green with envy.

Figure 4.8. Phillip Hobson, Australian Serviceman with a Group of Japanese Women, Japan, c. April 1952.
Source: AWM HOBJ2914.
Yet, Hobson’s photograph is decorous enough; nothing overly suggestive is portrayed and delicate Australian sensibilities back home would not be offended. There were dangers in sexualising the Occupation too overtly, for the DPI’s target audience was female as well as male, domestic as well as military. Hedonistic imagery did not wash well with the general Australian community, which considered that nothing good could come from anything other than an armed encounter with the Japanese. The Australians were supposed to be in Japan to redeem the country and make it atone for past sins, not to enjoy themselves. The louche nightclub scene of ‘burlesque’ that characterised nocturnal Tokyo in the Occupation years, documented by Japanese photographers such as Tadahiko Hayashi, was off limits. The DPR’s Douglas Lee captured a troupe of scantily clad performers at the Ebisu camp in Tokyo, but pictures of the pervasive sexuality of life in and around the camps were routinely suppressed. Meanwhile, photographs of Japanese female nudity, often taken privately at striptease parties organised for the troops, circulated surreptitiously among the servicemen.

Domestic fears that the Australians were in grave moral danger in Japan seem to be anticipated by Neil Town in the *Australasian*, for he remarked, defensively and ungraciously:

> None of the Australians seemed to be interested in the girls—and Japanese girls in the mass, it must be admitted, do not have any particular attraction or charm [being] small, chunky, bow-legged, flat-faced, and with protruding teeth.44

Alan Queale was only marginally more chivalrous. Some of the ‘Jap women’, he noted in his ‘Japan Diary’, published by the Australian War Memorial in 1947, ‘are tolerably good-looking’ and are ‘picturesque creatures’ with their kimonos and pretty paper umbrellas; ‘however, their wide moon-like faces often give one the impression that their heads are too large for their bodies’.45

To the contrary, the prolific photographs of Japanese women that adorn the often self-published memoirs of BCOF servicemen, albeit safely appearing years after the event, suggest that Japanese women did hold great appeal. A favoured photographic subject is the bare-breasted *ama*, the famous pearl divers employed at the Mikimoto establishment at Ise near

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43 Lee, LEEJ0427.
45 Queale, ‘Japan Diary’, 189.
Nagoya, a tourist magnet for the Australians in Japan. These risqué images could always be justified for their anthropological interest, a little like the photographs of naked native women that once proliferated in the pages of the *National Geographic*. Half a century after the Occupation, the BCOF veteran John Collins looked back at the experience in language free from humbug: ‘We were young and fit and horny and far from home’.

The subtext of Australian putdowns of the appearance of Japanese women is that the men were chastely keeping themselves pure for the lady folk back home in Australia. Reflecting its conservative female readership, the *Australian’s Women Weekly* discreetly avoided any sign of fraternisation with Japanese women in its photographic feature on the Occupation, published in May 1946. Rather, the lead photograph showed an Australian soldier dispensing chocolate to a ‘swarm’ of Japanese infants. In a long feature article entitled ‘There’s Plenty of Work for Our Boys in Japan’, the *Weekly’s* special correspondent in Japan, Dorothy Drain, reassured readers that ‘your soldier’ is not having a good time in Japan. ‘Don’t be led astray by the photos they send home’, she advised, for ‘he is doing a job and is not enjoying the post-war tourist season’. Acknowledging sexual relations between occupier and occupied was out of bounds. Any physical contact was incidental and strictly reserved to the performance of menial tasks. The *Weekly’s* staff photographer Bill Brindle’s picture of a kimono-clad house girl tying the shoe laces of a senior Australian air force officer, which illustrated another of Drain’s features on Japan, conveyed the decorum of the relationship.

The sanitised version of impeccable Australian male behaviour provided by the *Women’s Weekly* was confounded by stories of their scandalous off-duty activities that started circulating in the daily press, feeding suspicions that the men of BCOF were debauched malingerers on a paid holiday, and entrenching the impression that the troops were debasing the heroic standards set by Australian soldiers in battle. Certainly liaisons between troops and local women were common, even prolific, and prostitution of varying kinds and degrees flourished. Postwar Japan was a severely dislocated society. Male breadwinners were in short

46 See, for example, Philip M. Green, *Memories of Occupied Japan* (Blackheath: Phillip Maxwell Green, 1987), 128.
48 See *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 11 May 1946, 18, 19.
supply and many Japanese women, including war widows, had hungry children and elderly relatives to support and were often in dire need. Having been complicit in the provision of what were euphemistically called ‘Recreation and Amusement Stations’ for foreign troops at the beginning of the Occupation, MacArthur’s administration outlawed all forms of public prostitution in March 1946. However, it continued to flourish unofficially. In Tokyo, the panpan, the Western-styled nocturnal streetwalker catering to the prowling Allied soldier, became a symbol of the Occupation. In Hiroshima Prefecture, prostitution had thrived from the time the Americans first arrived in late 1945; when the Australians came early the following year they were greeted by women waiting at the Kure docks. Inhibitions were shed and scruples were discarded. In isolated cases, the occupiers’ cameras were put to highly illicit use. One of the BCOF wives recalls a colleague of her husband’s proudly displaying his homemade collection of pornography in the officer’s mess one evening. Included among the usual images of festivals and the like were nude photographs of his wife, his 18-year-old daughter and his Japanese house girl.50

The unsavoury outcome of the sexual relations taking place between Australian men and Japanese women was documented by the MHS, a unit dedicated to the primacy of ‘evidentiary’ and objective still and moving images.51 Alan Queale’s photograph of five Japanese women employed by one of the Australian infantry battalions camped at Hiro near Kure betrays an unedifying story (see Figure 4.9). It was taken in September 1946, during an official crackdown on the spread of venereal disease in the BCOF community that led to the victimisation of Japanese women, including those who either worked with or in any way associated with Australian servicemen, such as domestic staff in BCOF housing. In what one disgusted Australian officer called ‘a panic’, ‘Anti-VD Officers’ rounded up local women found to be suffering from venereal disease.52 Four such diagnosed women stand shamefaced before the official photographer, along with one who turns away from the camera, grinning perhaps through sheer embarrassment (Figure 4.9).

51 See Lakin, Contact, 113, on the MHS’s emphasis on documentary veracity.
52 Major A.W. John, Duty Defined, Duty Done: A Memoir (Cheltenham: The Gen Publishers, 2004), 211. In her Occupation memoir, Jennie Woods recalled her Japanese house girls being systematically harassed and one removed from her service. See Woods, Which Way Will the Wind Blow?, 67. The round-ups of Japanese women for VD screening were not confined to BCOF; the Americans also employed the practice, especially in Tokyo in 1946.
This ignominious episode was typical of BCOF’s inability to deal constructively with the issue of sexual relationships. It refused to countenance official brothels to regulate the business and monitor the sexual health of Japanese women and, hence, that of its own men. Scapegoated, Japanese women did not matter; the good name of the diggers overrode everything. However, that too was under threat, as allegations about vaulting rates of venereal disease in the Australian contingent took effect, and the force came under fire from the federal president of the Legion of Ex-Servicemen, who described the Australians in Japan as ‘morally rotting’.53 Having noted the potential pleasures of the country to young men in February 1946, Massey Stanley found himself in Japan a little over two years later as a member of an official investigatory

team sent by the army minister that was dubbed the ‘Sin Busters’. Press outrage at Australian hedonism in Japan was a touch hypocritical. On assignment in Japan in 1950, the Age photographer Ron Lovitt—later famous for capturing the climactic moment of the ‘tied’ cricket test in Brisbane in 1960 between Australia and the West Indies—captured some unnamed pressmen on a night out, evidently relishing the attention of ‘geisha girls’ (see Figure 4.10). Occupied Japan was a moveable feast, in more ways than one.

In any event, neither the barrage of criticism from home nor the threatened loss of their precious beer ration stopped the Australians’ liaisons with Japanese women. In one of the Occupation’s most uplifting developments, these relationships sometimes blossomed into marriage—over 600 of them—in Japan or back home in Australia. At least two Australian military photographers, the MHS’s Claude Holzheimer and the battalion photographer Ian Robertson, wed Japanese women. For Japanese men, these foreign relationships were a humiliating reminder of the completeness of the national defeat in the war.

To the official BCOF photographers, the ‘Japs’ (the sneering denomination was mostly confined to the males) were automatically associated with the horrors of the recent war. Accordingly, the photographers frequently produced images of Japanese men as humbled, demeaned and emasculated—they were pictured working in a BCOF typing pool, doing BCOF’s bidding as cooks or servants, or peddling tourist paraphernalia to BCOF tourists, as in the image of the digger in Ginza. One image, also taken in downtown Tokyo, shows a Japanese man shining BCOF boots. Some of the photographic putdowns are rather

54 See AWM 147661; AWM BROJ0288; AWM HOBJ5642; AWM SWEJ0029.
more subtle. In one of Allan Cuthbert’s photographs (see Figure 4.11), a Japanese labourer works with an oxyacetylene torch in the shipbreaking yards. His clothes are virtually rags except for the straw boater—suitably nautical for a shipyard scene, perhaps, but incongruously jaunty and ridiculous in the gritty context. Military defeat and occupation had effected a transformation in fearsome Japanese male stereotypes. The fanatical Japanese warrior had become something other altogether—obedient and hardworking, but faintly vaudevillian.

The vigorous sexual life of the Australian Occupation also created another challenge for the official cohort of photographers, one that was assiduously shirked. They habitually photographed newborn BCOF babies with their mothers (it was a fertile force), but Australian children born to Japanese women were a consensual taboo, on both Australian and Japanese sides. In 1948, press reports of children of Australian paternity
in a Hiroshima orphanage caused a stir, but the extent of this legacy remained largely unpublicised for decades until the recent investigative work of Walter Hamilton.\textsuperscript{55} You will not find photographs of the more than 100 Australian–Japanese children in the official Occupation oeuvre. BCOF’s hypocritical response to sexual interactions with Japanese women marred one of its major achievements in Occupied Japan, its role in overseeing Japan’s first postwar election in April 1946, in which the nation’s women were able to vote for the first time. This historic occasion was enthusiastically supported by the Australian Government, and was a source of satisfaction to many of the men of BCOF itself. Australian observer teams visited thousands of polling pools on election day and the poll was a resounding success. Some 66 per cent of eligible female voters turned out, 14 million of them, and 39 women were elected to the Japanese Diet. Ironically and indicatively, one of these newly elected female members of parliament was a former prostitute.\textsuperscript{56}

An Airbrushed Japan

Despite its ostensible power, BCOF was acutely aware of its vulnerability in Japan. The Australian military leadership never stopped distrusting the Japanese. As late as December 1946, after six months in the job, BCOF Commander Robertson was unwilling to be put into social or even diplomatic situations in which he would be forced by protocol to shake hands with a Japanese, even refusing to attend a Tokyo welcome for the visiting Australian Roman Catholic cardinal, Normon Gilroy, because one of the hosts was the Japanese archbishop of Tokyo.\textsuperscript{57} Like timid travellers, the Australians in Japan feared they were at the locals’ mercy. Gullivers in the land of Lilliput, the Australians suspected that an intimidating military presence was no guarantee of mastery, and that the dextrous, determined Japanese still pulled the strings on their own turf.

\textsuperscript{55} See ‘Hiroshima Orphans’, Sydney Morning Herald, 26 April 1948; Walter Hamilton, \textit{Children of the Occupation: Japan’s Untold Story} (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2012). Hamilton wrote of the social tragedy of the mixed-race children, disowned by Australia and discriminated against (as were their mothers) in Japan.

\textsuperscript{56} George Davies, \textit{The Occupation of Japan} (St Lucia, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2001), 185–86. See also Takemae, \textit{Allied Occupied of Japan}, 265.

\textsuperscript{57} See Ball anecdote in Alan Rix, ed., \textit{Intermittent Diplomat: The Japan and Batavia Diaries of W. Macmahon Ball} (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 150.
This anxiety is reflected in the official photographs. Compensating for the relative lack of active soldiering, and sensitive about its subsidiary role in an Occupation largely dominated by the Americans, BCOF strove to keep up appearances with a penchant for ceremonial marches. The MHS was there to capture every salute and every formality when visiting dignitaries required the Australians to display their skill at drill.\(^{58}\) Guard duties in symbolic locations, notably outside the imperial palace in Tokyo, were a favoured photographic subject. The impression is that of a force determined to keep the emperor within, rather than to deter intruders. Australians were less forgiving of Hirohito than their American counterparts, believing he should have been tried as a war criminal along with General Tojo at the Tokyo war crimes trials that began in April 1946, under the stern judicial eye of the Queenslander Sir William Webb.

The Americans had retained Hirohito as a crucial plank in their program to stabilise Japan and have his subjects accept the process of reform.\(^{59}\) As early as February 1946, *Life* magazine published a photographic essay entitled ‘Sunday at Hirohito’s’, showing a reassuringly normal family man with an improbable interest in American culture—one photograph shows him purportedly reading ‘the funnies’ from the US military newspaper the *Stars and Stripes* to his son, the Crown Prince.\(^{60}\) However, turning the ‘living god’ into a sympathetic human being had the disconcerting effect of boosting Hirohito’s public appeal. His tour of Kure and Hiroshima in December 1947—his first visit since the cataclysm of August 1945—was a source of official anxiety in the upper echelons of the Australian Mission in Japan.\(^{61}\) The tour occasioned a welter of photographic activity. A report compiled by the Japan expert A.B. Jamieson for the Australian Mission quoted the worrying remark from a Hiroshima city official, made to Allied pressmen covering Hirohito’s tour of the city: ‘The Emperor is the source of our atomic energy for reconstruction, as powerful as the American atomic energy

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58 Photographs of ‘spectacular’ parades dominate the final, commemorative edition of the Osaka-based broadsheet *BCON*. See *BCON*, 6 April 1950, ‘Special Last Supplement’.


60 *Life*, 4 February 1946, 75–79.

is for destruction’. Harry Freeman’s photograph of Hirohito’s visit to Osaka the previous year (see Figure 4.12) reflects Australian fears that the emperor was a potent source of national devotion to a public unused to his visibility and accessibility. As American and Japanese police strain to hold the adoring masses back, Hirohito doffs his hat to a common countryman in the crowd doing the same, an act of hitherto unknown humility and mutual respect. Compared with the static staidness, verging on sterility, of much of the MHS’s work, this image radiates energy and movement, capturing something new, dangerous and volatile in Japanese public life.

The official photographers liked to portray the Australians in situations of mastery, often in the pose of taking in Japanese landscape as they went about their military tasks. In Allan Cuthbert’s photograph (see Figure 4.13), a group of diggers on patrol view the countryside near Fukuyama in Hiroshima Prefecture in the late summer of 1946 while in search of sequestered stores and weapons. The Australians occupy the space as well as look down on it, surveying a subordinate and depopulated landscape that invites inspection, appreciation and, ultimately, appropriation. Cuthbert provides a reassuring picture of Occupied Japan, eliciting a calm control that suggests all is well—the Australians are in cool command of all they survey. The picture taps into a representational tradition of spectatorship dating back to the halcyon days of the British Empire, what James R. Ryan has called an ‘imperial way of seeing’. Along with topographical survey and cartography, photography was a vital instrument of visual colonisation in the political and military project of British imperial power. The ‘very idea of Empire’, Ryan wrote, ‘depended in part on an idea of landscape, as both controlled space and the means of representing such control’. Yet, if Cuthbert’s photograph reproduces this colonialist aesthetic, it also belies the sense of a force never fully confident of its place both in Japan, and within the American-dominated Occupation itself.

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Figure 4.13. Allan Cuthbert, *Soldiers of BCOF 65th Battalion, on Patrol*, Fukuyama Prefecture, 10 September 1946. Source: AWM 132639.
Significantly, Cuthbert’s image of a rural idyll purges Japan of signs of the war and its difficult social aftermath. Australian photographers tended to turn a blind eye to the manifest social problems of postwar Japan, which were especially evident in its cities. Selective vision also improved the appearance of a Japan pockmarked with eyesores, caused by the Allied bombing and by a country improvising and rebuilding at breakneck speed. While charged with the task of making the Australian Occupation look good, some of the less flagrantly propagandistic work of DPR photographers like Hobson and Harold Dunkley reveal a strong attraction to aspects of Japanese culture and landscape. Hobson composed a series of studies of Buddhist statues, while Dunkley was drawn to photographing domestic architecture and gardens. However, the social disturbances evident in the cities, including strikes and mass demonstrations of support for communism, are largely ignored in favour of a rustic and essentially docile Japan.

A representative picture is Phillip Hobson’s photograph of the quiet communion of a Japanese girl and her grandmother at work in a tranquil vegetable garden somewhere in rural Japan in November 1949 (see Figure 4.14). The image is an example of what John Urry and Jonas Larsen call professional photographic ‘gardening’, in which the appearance of idealised tourist sites are kept intact by the ‘airbrushing away’ of unsettling and unsightly evidence of modernity. Overtly a celebration of the decorous formality of Japanese life, it is an implicitly political picture of a Japan in need of benign nurture. At least Hobson’s image is a representational advance on the wartime stereotype of the fanatical Japanese warrior. We see a photographer struggling to balance the didactic requirements of effective public relations with a visual sensibility responding to the (conspicuously feminised) cultural spectacle before him.

64 See for example AWM HOBJ0467; AWM DUKJ3276.
65 In a photomontage depicting the changes in Occupied Japan during 1946, and ‘the new way of life under democracy’, the Christmas and New Year Souvenir edition of the service newspaper BCON included an unattributed photograph of demonstrating strikers in Tokyo. In fact, the Australian Government strongly advocated workplace reform in Japan, including supporting the organisation of trade unions. Christine de Matos, Encouraging Democracy in a Cold War Climate (Canberra: Australia-Japan Research Centre, 2001) provides a detailed account of constructive Australian political policies relating to postwar Japan. These often conflicted with the American Cold War mentality, especially as the Occupation progressed and the US reprioritised Japan as a regional bulwark against communism.
Individual photographic portraits of the Japanese indicate a preference for traditional national types mostly encountered in the waterways, paddies and mountain valleys outside the cities. When he was not photographing BCOF routines and activities, Alan Queale sought the people and places of a Japan that was removed in every sense from the war. His private albums are dominated by bucolic Japan—by images of rural women of all ages from matriarchs to musume, and plain but evocative portraits of artisans and workers, such as his picture of a Hiroshima oysterman (see Figure 4.15). Modernity is strictly the privilege of the foreigners. Hobson’s photograph of a BCOF despatch rider on a motorcycle swiftly passing a Japanese tradesman labouring with a bullock cart provides a stark example of what is an essentially imperialising photographic discourse.67

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67 Hobson was in full public relations mode, and the photograph was carefully staged (two shots from different angles were taken) (AWM HOBJ0067; AWM HOBJ0072).
Figure 4.15. Alan Queale, *Oysterman*, Kaitaichi, Hiroshima Prefecture, c. 1946–48.
Source: AWM 12000.006.001.
Reminiscent of Victorian-era anthropological images of vanishing peoples, the official photographs provide a human catalogue of a beguilingly backward Japan being preserved by an appreciative Occupier. Somewhere in Hiroshima Prefecture in the early 1950s, a farming family obligingly smiles for Claude Holzheimer’s camera (see Figure 4.16). The Australian Government supported the difficult process of agrarian reform in postwar Japan, involving the prohibition of absentee ownership and the transfer of agricultural land to former tenant farmers. Perhaps the photograph is a visual register of this official support. Certainly, the vivid individuality of father, mother and child shines through. Yet it is an image in which the processes of history are absent—the family is frozen in time. It is almost as if the war, and the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, had never happened.

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68 See Davies, *The Occupation of Japan*, 296.
Figure 4.17. Phillip Hobson, *Australian Soldier Offering Money to Beggar*, Tokyo, 11 January 1955.

Source: AWM HOBJ5643.
The rural emphasis of Australian Occupation photography is strikingly at odds with Japanese photography of the edgy postwar era. Realist Japanese photographers such as Ken Domon and Tadahiko Hayashi identified urban images of social dislocation and degradation. Streetwalkers, ex-military down-and-outers, and vagrants were identified as the appropriate visual material for a shattered country contending with the cultural and psychological pressure of the Occupation itself and the upheaval created by the war. Shocking images such as Hayashi’s 1946 picture of a filthy young street waif, perhaps 10 years of age, smoking in the proletarian Ueno station district of downtown Tokyo, are virtually absent from the photographic archive of the Australian Occupation. When Phillip Hobson made a rare, belated visit to a similar milieu, he bleached the grime and squalor with crisp winter sunlight, and populated it with a well-dressed and well-fed Japanese family on an outing and an Australian soldier providing charity in the form of a 10 yen note to a cheerfully grateful beggar (see Figure 4.17). Japanese postwar social distress becomes a validation of the Occupation, and testimony to the radiant beneficence of BCOF itself.

‘No Loitering’

One final image, taken by the prolific Hobson, provides an illuminating footnote to the story of Australian official photography of the Occupation. The longest serving member of the Australian photographic cohort in Japan, Hobson knew the country well; he based himself there from 1950 while making sporadic visits to Korea to cover the war, during which time he took many fine pictures of Australians in action. He learned the Japanese language and set up a photographic laboratory in Tokyo, staffed by Japanese, to facilitate the processing and distribution of his pictures to Australian and overseas newspapers. As we have seen, Hobson was highly receptive to the visual seductions of Japan and several of his pictures express a strong liking for the country.

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Figure 4.18. Phillip Hobson, *Australian Soldier and Japanese Stand Guard at Ebisu Camp*, Tokyo, 8 August 1954.

Source: AWM HOBJ5286.
However, in August 1954, the year before he left Japan for good, Hobson took a photograph (see Figure 4.18) of an Australian soldier named ‘Dasher’ Dean standing guard at the Ebisu barracks in Tokyo. Beside the lanky Australian and rigidly standing to attention is his fellow guard, a small-statured Japanese. The scene disconcertingly resembles that first historic meeting of Hirohito with the towering MacArthur. The Occupation was well over by 1954. BCOF had officially ceased to exist two years earlier when the Peace Treaty with Japan came into effect, although Australia maintained a tiny military presence in Japan until the mid-1950s—Ebisu had served as rest camp for Commonwealth forces fighting in Korea. Rapprochement between bitter enemies was underway, with diplomatic links being forged and trade deals soon to be signed. The two antagonists were now standing side by side. However, Hobson’s photograph suggests they were not yet on an equal footing— one thinks it unnecessary to have Dasher Dean accentuate his height advantage by standing on a raised platform. Above the Japanese a sign reads ‘NO LOITERING’.

Such are the humiliating legacies of military occupation; perhaps Hobson thought it an amusing visual joke. Yet it was the occupied people who had the last laugh, for Japan itself was hardly ‘loitering’. It was on the move, busily engaged in a process of national regeneration and well on the way to becoming the powerhouse of the 1960s and beyond, leaving Australia, and virtually the rest of world, lagging in its wake. It took Australians some years to appreciate the implications of the Japanese proverb *makeru ga kachi* (‘losing is winning’). 70 Well intentioned but complacent, the BCOF photographers of the Allied project to remake Japan had produced a representational absurdity—a window into the country’s past, rather than an anticipation of its future. The melding of travel and military imagery had not so much captured Japan as revealed the shallowness at the heart of the Orientalist ideology of the Occupation. In the end, Japan rebuilt and adapted while staying true to itself.
