

## The Art of War: A Study of Japanese POW Artwork

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In the words of E. McClung Fleming, “To know man we must study the things he has made.”<sup>168</sup> Man creates objects to fulfill needs of self, reaffirm beliefs, and establish symbols of meaning.<sup>169</sup> These objects make up material culture. Scholars of material culture learn about the ideas or values of a community through the study of artifacts.<sup>170</sup> The study of artifacts facilitates a study of culture because objects embody and reflect cultural beliefs.<sup>171</sup> But artifacts can document culture clash and culture bias, as well. Studying material culture requires thinking outside one’s personal cultural beliefs or understanding because all things arose in different contexts.

This paper presents a model for the study of Japanese prisoner of war artwork created during and immediately following World War Two and collected by Allied soldiers. No study currently known has addressed these artifacts of individuals who survived conflict and conquest. It identifies and analyzes examples of Japanese POW art housed in private collections and museums across the world, but focuses on two pieces from a private collection in Tuscola, Illinois. The model is based upon Fleming’s model of artifact study from his text “Artifact Study: A Proposed Model.” His model utilizes a system of collecting factual evidence or factual identification, evaluation and comparisons, cultural analysis, and object interpretation.<sup>172</sup> While Fleming applied the model to furniture, the objects this paper analyzes all share a similar form—two dimensional artwork drawn in various medias, such as colored pencil, ink pen, and pencil and applied to different canvases of silk, linen, burlap, and cotton fabrics. The artworks serve as souvenirs that occupying soldiers brought back from the Pacific Theater and indicate Allied soldier and Japanese POW relations. Finally, they provide evidence of Japanese POW cultural identity. Drawing on Fleming’s model, this paper endeavors to discover what kinds of symbolism are present in these works of art, decipher their meanings, create a model for understanding Japanese POW’s cultural identity through art, and discuss their relevance within the modern world.

### **Factual Identification**

As a child I vaguely knew the story surrounding the two pictures hanging on the second-story staircase landing of my parents’ house. I knew my grandfather, Paul Jones, originally owned them and that he came to possess them long ago. I would not say that I forgot about or neglected their presence in my home while growing up, but their seemingly uncelebrated placement on the staircase wall contributed to my, perhaps, overlooking them. For years, those pictures hung over my family as our household underwent change. And while many things did change, such as three structural renovations and a few distinct periods of interior designing, the pictures remained in the exact location my mother placed them twenty-two years before.

The pictures themselves, two Japanese women, do not coincide with a chosen color scheme or my parents’ specific aesthetic design preference. After spending a few moments observing them one day a question sprang to mind: why keep them? Undeniably these objects held more meaning

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<sup>168</sup> E. McClung Fleming, “Artifact Study: A Proposed Model,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, (Vol. 9, no. 6, 1974), 153-155.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>171</sup> Jules Prown, “Mind in Matter: Intro to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio* (Vol., no., 1982), 1-3.

<sup>172</sup> Fleming, “Artifact Study: A Proposed Model,” 153-157.

than I initially assumed. My mother, the obvious person to answer these style questions, offered an explanation to satisfy my curiosity. She discovered the drawings in her parent's belongings in the 1970s and asked her father, Paul Jones, about their history.

When prompted about their provenance, she explained that the pictures came into my grandfather's possession during World War Two amid his stationing at a camp in the Philippine Islands in 1946. A Japanese Prisoner of War created the pictures for him and he gave them to his mother as a gift. After her death, my grandfather took possession of them before passing them down to his daughter, my mother. Since these pictures were my grandfather's war mementos, they held special meaning, and my mother wanted to retain them. Although my mother's knowledge of the pictures ended here, the answers gave me greater insight into why the pictures had been a staple within my home. Still, questions lingered on. Where exactly did they come from? Who made them? Why were they made? And why would Paul hand over two objects that denoted his military career?

A man of many talents, Paul died having lived a full life as a husband, father, grandfather, retired postal worker, businessman, master gardener, and World War Two veteran. I never thought much on his wartime service, partly because it was not overtly visible in his home and somewhat because he never spoke on the matter to me; nor did I ask. Now that it is too late to ask him about these objects, I must piece together evidence from others. I questioned Paul's other children and his only surviving brother about the drawings only to learn that everyone knew less than my mother, if anything at all. My father, on the other hand, offered a wealth of information to the artwork's provenance. I did not ask my father at first since he joined Paul's family by marriage and therefore seemed least likely to know about the drawings, or so I believed. A military veteran himself, my father found deep connections with those parts of Paul's life, connections that I cannot fathom nor comprehend, and he proved to house a wealth of information.

According to my father, Paul solicited the drawings from two Japanese prisoners of war in exchange for some sort of small luxury, such as cigarettes or toiletries. The drawings were supposedly of the creator's female relation or girlfriend, at least as explained by my father. Paul supplied the men with two handkerchiefs and colored pencils to draw with. Upon their completion, Paul sent them home to his mother as a souvenir, along with a paper folding fan and pair of carved wooden shoes. Shortly after discovering these souvenirs, I stumbled across two boxes of letters my grandfather wrote to his mother while serving in WWII. Paul's mother kept almost every letter he sent her, along with several other souvenirs from his time overseas. After hours of reading, a letter surfaced that reinforced the information Paul told my father:

Manila

P.I.

June 25, 46

Dear Mom:

Your

letters are kinda getting ahead of me so I thought I had better start to write... I got one letter to-day from you. Yesterday I got two from you and two from Jo one from Carroll. You are the only one so far that has addressed my letters S/Sgt. You wanted to know if I got to watching the show. Well they have a top over the curtain. But the way it rains over here you get wet any way. The wind blows right thru. You have to wear your rain coat. We got payed Monday. I don't know how much I will draw but it will be more. I had a Japanese prisoner to draw the picture of Jo Ann that she sent me. I think it is pretty nice. I'll send it to you! Have you gotten those pictures I had made on those handkerchiefs? You should be getting them soon... Well Mom will close for now.

Love,  
Paul

Although mention of the drawings exists briefly in this letter, it stands as the only documentation of their provenance and makes reference to another picture drawn by a Japanese POW. This letter presents other useful information regarding the approximate time of year the pictures were created, sent to Paul's mother in Tuscola, Illinois, and narrows the location of origin to the area around Manila, Philippines.<sup>173</sup>

Paul worked as a farm laborer until late January of 1945 when the United States Army drafted him. He was nineteen years of age upon his entrance into boot camp in early February (Fig 0.1).<sup>174</sup> Paul began his boot camp in Arkansas before transferring to Texas, then later again to California. In late April of 1945, Paul received word of his deployment overseas to a POW camp in Manila, Philippine Islands and boarded the S.S. *Cape Canso* in early May. The war ended before the S.S. *Cape Canso* made landfall in Manila, Philippine Islands, but Paul remained at the U.S. camp in Manila guarding Japanese POWs over one year. During this time, the Philippines gained independence from the United States with the Treaty of Manila. On October 19, 1946 the S.S. *Cape Canso*, along with Paul, returned to San Francisco Bay, California, having completed its service (Fig 0.2).<sup>175</sup> He saw no combat during his deployment, but Paul collected many souvenirs from his time in the Philippines, including the two handkerchiefs.

The pictures on these handkerchiefs depict women in Asian attire with representational backgrounds. The artist drew on two different types and sizes of handkerchief.<sup>176</sup> Neither handkerchief offers any indication as to the date of creation. However, it must have been created prior to Paul's letter mentioning the objects, thus dating the handkerchiefs to before June of 1946.

One handkerchief (Fig. 1) is approximately sixteen inches in length and sixteen inches in height. Density of weaving created decorative line contouring borders and a thick seam encases all four edges. Microscopic analyses of this handkerchief's fibers indicate it is linen. The handkerchief shows degrees of discoloration in several areas varying from off-white to light tan. A drawing completed in colored pencil encompasses an eleven square inch section at the handkerchief's center. Colors used in the drawing include black, green, brown, blue, red, and yellow. The letters P.J. are stitched in the upper left-hand corner in red thread – Paul's monogram signifying his personal ownership.

The second handkerchief (Fig. 2) differs in size from the first as it is fifteen and one half inches in width and eighteen inches in height. This handkerchief lacks any particular decoration, but like figure one, a thick seam runs along each of the handkerchief's sides, and its selvage edge is rough. A microscopic analysis of this handkerchief's fibers also indicates it is linen. Another colored pencil drawing covers the handkerchief save a two-inch boarder along its four edges. Colors used in the drawing include black, green, brown, blue, red, and yellow.

### **Evaluation and Cultural Analysis**

No secondary analysis of this type of POW art exists. After months of searching, only four comparable artifacts surfaced: one at the Australian National Maritime Museum, two at the Pacific

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<sup>173</sup> Paul Jones, letter to Mrs. Hubert Jones, June 25, 1946.

<sup>174</sup> Paul Jones, Courtesy of Kathy Sapp.

<sup>175</sup> S.S. Cape Canso-Arrived in San Francisco Bay From Manila, Philippine Islands, October 19, 1946, Strand Photos 611 Larkin Street, San Francisco. Courtesy of Kathy Sapp.

<sup>176</sup> Handkerchiefs are a form of kerchief or thin piece of hemmed fabric typically carried within a pocket for the intent of personal hygiene.

War Museum in Guam, and a fourth at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois. Several similar Japanese POW artworks appear online in blog spots and World War II memorial forums but unanswered questions surround them, as well. No other information or literature on the artwork produced by Japanese POWs exists in text form. The information in this paper shall begin the process of evaluation.

One drawing (Fig. 4) depicts a woman standing outside. She wears a flat black hat, green, blue, and red kimono with white birds on the shoulders, and her hair falls to roughly chin length. Only the woman's portrait is drawn. The woman wears a blue and green kimono with a red collar, and a tree branch and fence appear in the background, along with a faded green pagoda. Japanese characters drawn on the left side of the picture read "Drawn by Shumei" or Hidemasa, according to Ayumu Ota, Exhibit Coordinator of the National Museum of Japanese History in Sakura-city, Chiba, Japan.<sup>177</sup> Ayumu translated the signature and indicated that the first symbols represent the name of the person and the last symbol means "drawn by" or "painted by," depending on the reader (Fig. 3).

Shumei also drew the image on the second kerchief. The second drawing (Fig. 5) contains a Japanese woman's portrait. She is dressed in a green kimono, with a blue and black collar, and white red, and yellow bust detailing. A bridge railing, parapet, deer, and mountains appear in the background of the picture. According to Dr. Hisashi Horio, Professor Emeritus at Kobe University in Japan, the tops of the parapets most likely had metal coverings in actuality and the entire picture "expresses the scenery of the famous town, Nara."<sup>178</sup> Horio claims the deer in the background easily identifies with the town of Nara. The city of Nara, Japan is located in the Kansai region at the base of Mount Wakakusa and houses the Nara Park, established in 1880.<sup>179</sup> Nara Park, one of the Japanese locations of Scenic Beauty, contains over one thousand wild sika deer, temples, and gardens. Native to East Asia, all Sika deer notably retain their white spots through maturity. The deer in the drawing of the second handkerchief, a male based upon its antlers, contains these spots. Japanese culture holds this park in high esteem and holds these deer as spiritually sacred beings.<sup>180</sup> After 1946, these deer became stripped of this cultural value and were instead viewed as national treasures. The deer's important spiritual symbolism may offer insight into Shumei's artistic intentions, because at the time of the drawings' creation these deer still held sacred importance. Shumei even included one in his drawing to signify the importance of his spirituality.

Horio believes that because this drawing (Fig. 5) describes the city of Nara, the first drawing (Fig. 4) may depict either Nara or Kyoto, as "painters usually imagined those two towns when [drawing] pictures."<sup>181</sup> Kyoto, located in the Kansai region, contains thousands of religious shrines and gardens, which can be seen in figure two. According to Horio, Shumei did not possess any exceptional talent and the handkerchiefs produced do not bear high quality or value. He believes the drawings were not created for cultural value, but instead for monetary value. Horio's analysis of the pictures depicted on the handkerchiefs offers only one explanation to their meaning. Additional comparison with Japanese art, culture, and symbolism provides an even deeper understanding.

Every culture has its own set of symbols connected with experience and beliefs. Scholars

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<sup>177</sup> Ayumu Ota, email to Rachael Sapp, September 13, 2014.

<sup>178</sup> Hisashi Horio, email to Debra Reid, October 20, 2014.

<sup>179</sup> Pradyumna P. Karan, *Japan in the 21st Century: Environment, Economy, and Society*, (The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 237-240.

<sup>180</sup> Dale R. McCullough, Seiki Takatsuki, and Koichi Kaji, eds., *Sika Deer: Biology and Management of Native and Introduced Populations*, 2009 ed. (Tokyo: Springer, 2008), 347-350.

<sup>181</sup> Horio, October 20, 2014.

must interpret and reinterpret these symbols to divulge their meanings and understand changes over time.<sup>182</sup> Thomas Schlereth, a scholar of material culture, believes that material culture serves important abstract functions outside their obvious realms. In his text “Material Culture Studies in America, 1876-1976” he argues that these abstract functions might include unconscious beliefs, ideas, values, or hidden meanings. Schlereth supports his argument based upon a text by E. McClung Fleming. The danger of symbolism in material culture study claim both Fleming and Schlereth are over analyzing or looking too deeply into symbolism. Therefore, scholars must carefully distinguish between what objects contain symbolic meaning and those that lack overtly symbolic natures.<sup>183</sup>

Scholars understand that symbols play an important role in Japanese art and design and have done so for centuries. Did these prisoners use their knowledge of Japanese symbolism and imagery to convey meaning through art? Both drawings contain patterns on the kimonos. Closer examinations of these patterns is necessary since symbolism carries such a significant weight within Japanese art culture. Unfortunately, only one pattern on a kimono (Fig. 5) is discernable. If identified, however, this symbol may provide insight into Shumei’s drawings. *Symbols of Japan: Thematic Motifs in Art and Design*, by Merrily C. Baird, identifies and explains themes within Japanese art. Baird breaks the text down into different categories, such as the cosmos, plants, insects, and land mammals, detailing specific objects in each.<sup>184</sup> Although no example of Japanese POW artwork is discussed in *Symbols of Japan* it does aid in analyzing the drawings for potential symbolism. The kimono pattern from figure two closely resembles that of the karabana or China flower, a flower containing four petals in a diamond shape. A closer view of this can be seen in figure four. While the figure two kimono pattern appeared similar, the example in the Baird text does not entirely match.

*Legend in Japanese Art*, by Henri L. Joly, also recognizes and classifies symbols in Japanese artwork.<sup>185</sup> Again, much like the Baird text, it provides useful understandings of Japanese symbolism, however no China flower example is shown. The only example of a China flower bearing a nearly exact match to the figure two kimono comes from *The Elements of Japanese Design: A Handbook of Family Crests, Heraldry, and Symbolism*, by John Dower.<sup>186</sup> Categorized as a Japanese heraldic motif, China flowers represent symmetry and courtly connotations. Perhaps Shumei used the symbolism behind the China flower in tandem with the idea of Nara Park to convey status or beauty and symmetry within nature. Although no other distinguishable patterns present themselves in Shumei’s drawings, others might find this type of analysis useful, if not crucial, to dissecting and interpreting their own POW artworks.

### **Interpretation**

Japanese people greatly respect both art and nature, and their culture thrives in rich oral, symbolic, and written traditions. These traditions carry over to all aspects of their lives, including military service. *The Anguish of Surrender: Japanese POWs of World War II*, by Ulrich Straus,

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<sup>182</sup> Thomas Schlereth, “Material Culture Studies in America, 1876-1976” *Material Culture Studies* (Nashville, TN: AASLH, 1982), 42-46.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-45.

<sup>184</sup> Merrily C. Baird, *Symbols of Japan: Thematic Motifs in Art and Design*. (New York: Rizzoli, 2001), 7.

<sup>185</sup> Henri L. Joly, *Legend in Japanese Art: a Description of Historical Episodes, Legendary Characters, Folk-Lore Myths, Religious Symbolism, Illustrated in the Arts of Old Japan* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 1989), 11-21.

<sup>186</sup> John Dower, *Elements of Japanese Design: Handbook of Family Crests, Heraldry and Symbolism*, New ed. (Weatherhill, 1990), 35-36, 137.

yields invaluable insight into the lives of Japanese soldiers.<sup>187</sup> The *Anguish of Surrender* delves into warrior home life, military expectations, and what “surviving” the war meant for their future.

By the end of 1945 an estimated twenty to fifty thousand Japanese fighting forces surrendered to Allied militaries. Allied governments and military commanders stipulated that Japanese POWs receive treatment in agreement with appropriate international regulations.<sup>188</sup> This is not to say every Allied soldier followed protocol. Many held racist judgments and treated Japanese soldiers harshly and unjustly. The Japanese government accepted western practices towards prisoners of war throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century, but the support fell from favor following World War I, claiming that surrender challenged military beliefs.<sup>189</sup> During the years leading up to WWII, the Imperial Japanese Army espoused a philosophy that obligated soldiers to fight to the death rather than surrender, a procedure that mirrored the practices of Japanese conflict amid the pre-modern period. This policy and the attitudes surrounding it became indoctrinated in Japan’s youth, and a code of conduct, known as Senjinkun, forbade soldiers to surrender. The Senjinkun, a small booklet on military codes of conduct, delineated “concrete rules of conduct...so that those in zones of combat may wholly abide by the Imperial Rescript and enhance the moral virtues of the Imperial Army.”<sup>190</sup> It forbade surrender and retreat, stating that doing so caused all visible ties to their nation and families to permanently sever.

Japanese governmental propaganda campaigns celebrated the soldiers who perished in armed combat. This propaganda told troops that Allied forces tortured and killed prisoners as a means to motivate soldiers to die rather than accept defeat. According to the Japanese government, defeat also included being captured by the enemy. The phrase, “never live to experience shame as a prisoner,” cited in the Senjinkun, reportedly caused countless soldier suicides. In the event a soldier incurred a serious injury on the battlefield, medical officers often either killed them or gave them a grenade to commit suicide rather than fall into the hands of the enemy.<sup>191</sup> Although debates regarding the Senjinkun as legally mandatory and strictly followed by Japanese combatants remain prevalent among scholars, the text echoed Japan’s cultural patterns and affected both military personnel and civilians alike.

In 1943, the U.S. War Department published an Intelligence Bulletin entitled “Morale, Characteristics of Japanese Soldier.” The bulletin discusses the morale and characteristics of Japanese soldiers in WWII, essentially “[providing] enlisted men and junior officers with all the useful information possible about the individual enemy soldier they expect to face in battle.”<sup>192</sup> The Bulletin claims that the current state of morale and combat qualities “are frequently missing,” from Japanese leaders and that “this [evidence] is borne out by...observers in the field, by documentary evidence, and by prisoners of war.”<sup>193</sup>

Good characteristics of a Japanese soldier, as observed and documented by U.S. soldiers, include physical and mental strength, tenacious unto death, boldness, courage, at home in the

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<sup>187</sup> Ulrich Straus, *The Anguish of Surrender: Japanese POW's of World War II.* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2004), 4, 65-70, 256.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 17-20.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 17, 25.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 39, 40-45.

<sup>191</sup> Ikuhiko Hata. "From Consideration to Contempt: The Changing Nature of Japanese Military and Popular Perceptions of Prisoners of War Through the Ages". In *Prisoners of War and Their Captors in World War II.* (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic. 1996),269.

<sup>192</sup> “Morale, Characteristics of Japanese Soldier,” Intelligence Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 3 (Military Intelligence Service: November 1943) <http://www.lonesentry.com/intelbulletin/index.html> (Accessed November 24, 2014).

<sup>193</sup> “Morale, Characteristics of Japanese Soldier,” (Accessed November 24, 2014).

jungle, and discipline. Unacceptable behaviors of a Japanese soldier, as witnessed by U.S. soldiers, include poor marksmanship, occasional panic, and lack of imagination. U.S. soldiers also documented that there is nothing “super” about a Japanese soldier that sets him apart from any other country’s soldier. In another issue of the Bulletin, one soldier commented on his experiences of fighting hand-to-hand combat with Japanese soldiers. “[They] were expert at camouflage and [were] thoroughly trained to operate in the jungle. [They] obeyed orders very well and...officers lied to [them] frequently to bolster morale.”<sup>194</sup> Another stated that not every soldier was “willing to die when the odds were against him.”<sup>195</sup>

Japanese sources mentioned in the same Bulletin issue quoted one soldier explaining the “Guide to Certain Victory,” something all soldiers were taught by superior officers. The guide instructed Japanese soldiers to

Fight hard; leaving nothing undone. If you are afraid of dying, you will die in battle; if you are not afraid, you will not die; if you are thinking of going back home, you will never go; if you do not think of it, you will go home. Under no circumstances become a straggler or a prisoner of war. In case you become helpless, commit suicide nobly.<sup>196</sup>

Despite the regulations and pressures outlined in the Senjinkun thousands of Japanese soldiers still chose to surrender. Their reasons vary from deeming suicide inappropriate or lacking courage to end their lives, to the Allied propaganda reassuring fair treatment. A study conducted by Richard Aldrich on the diaries of Japanese soldiers challenged the perceptions that soldiers lived zealously for the Emperor and that family members would not accept their shameful returns home.<sup>197</sup> Unfortunately, no mention of Japanese POW artwork occurs in these diaries.

“We Have Been Reborn: Japanese Prisoners and the Allied Propaganda War in the Southwest Pacific,” by Allison Gilmore, discusses how Japanese prisoners of war interacted with their Allied captors. Because the Japanese artworks are doubly products of Allied and Japanese relations, this text supplies useful awareness into Japanese-Allied relations in prisoner of war camps.<sup>198</sup> Not all Allied soldiers treated Japanese prisoners with disdain. The information label discussing the two drawings at the Pacific War Museum in Guam supports this. It states that,

The works of art in this display were painted by a Japanese POW between 1945 and 1946. When not performing menial tasks or duties as prescribed by the American forces, the Japanese soldiers relaxed or passed the time playing games, writing poetry, or painting. Painting might include scenes of their homeland, sweethearts, or happier pre-war memories. The soldiers often traded for their painting materials or simply used spare materials at hand. In this case bed sheets

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> “Japanese Characteristics and Reaction in Battle,” Intelligence Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 8 (Military Intelligence Service: April 1944) <http://www.lonesentry.com/intelbulletin/index.html> (Accessed November 24, 2014).

<sup>196</sup> “Japanese Characteristics and Reaction in Battle,” (Accessed November 24, 2014).

<sup>197</sup> A Richard Aldrich, *The Faraway War: Personal Diaries of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (London: Corgi Books, 2006), 8-10.

<sup>198</sup> Allison Gilmore, “We Have Been Reborn: Japanese Prisoners and the allied Propaganda War in the Southwest Pacific”, *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (May 1995),195-215.

were cut into squares and used as canvas.<sup>199</sup>

In her article, Gilmore discusses one Japanese prisoner who shared his feelings of rebirth and renewal with being captured. Coinciding with Buddhist beliefs, some prisoners felt they died as soldiers figuratively and were reborn spiritually in the POW camps.<sup>200</sup> If this is true, the drawings could indicate spiritual symbolism. To answer this, more analysis is needed.

Each POW artwork that contained entire or partial provenance, those from Paul Jones, the Pacific War Museum, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, and the Australian National Maritime Museum, all indicate Japanese soldiers trading the drawings for small luxuries, such as cigarettes. However, comparing the provenance collected by Paul's relatives with the information given by Ayumu and Horio reveals inconsistencies and suggests altered memories at play. Where one relative stated Paul asked two different POWs to create them, the Japanese characters identified by Ayumu, "Drawn by Shumei," on both pieces suggest otherwise. Another inconsistency develops with the suggestion that both women drawn held personal connections to the creator, Shu-sei. In a correspondence with Horio, he suggested the drawings characterized a "pin-up" photo and that Shumei most likely never implied that he depicted one of his personal acquaintances.<sup>201</sup> While this remains a valid point, Shumei may very well have connected with his drawings in a deeper cultural sense.

The "pin-up" photo concept may, in fact, help explain one of the drawings from the Pacific War Museum in Guam.<sup>202</sup> The drawing in question depicts a naked woman of Japanese ancestry bathing in a body of water. Pin-up artwork ran rampant within soldier barracks. American troops received millions of magazine's containing these images during WWII. Some pin-up paintings even found their way onto military bombers. But does this mean these Japanese POW drawings all stand as examples of mid-twentieth century pin-up girls? Not necessarily. The drawing from the Pacific War Museum stands as the only drawing yet discovered containing a naked woman. Each example of this artwork preserved in museums or in private collections, including those owned by my family, contain a female figure. However, not every Japanese POW drawing available for public display includes them. While it is easy to suggest pin-up girls as a cure-all answer for the creation of these drawings, would the men who so painstakingly drew them, who incurred so much grief and pain and who lived in a culture where everything contained meaning, haphazardly construct drawings to fulfill Allied soldiers' attraction for pin-ups? None of the drawings, except the Guam example, resemble American pin-up girls. These drawings show women fully clothed in uncompromising situations. Furthermore, Paul most certainly did not send home drawings of pin-up girls to his mother. Additionally, the inclusion of the sika deer, at the time a sacred animal, proves that the drawings were more significant to the artist than just a pin-up drawing made to appease a U.S. soldier's desire for souvenirs.

Something significant occurred in these camps; two groups of men, supposed enemies, one imprisoned and the other captors, developed a unique form of trade. The relations between Allied forces and Japanese prisoners developing in these camps obviously caused changes in both the racist tendencies amongst Allied troops and the perceptions held by Japanese prisoners. Statistically speaking, morale of the Japanese soldier deteriorated severely by the beginning of

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<sup>199</sup> "Japanese World War Two Relics." Guam and Beyond, August 31, 2011. Accessed September 15, 2014. <http://dangerboyandpixie.wordpress.com/2011/08/31/japanese-world-war-two-relics/>.

<sup>200</sup> Gilmore, "We Have Been Reborn," 201.

<sup>201</sup> Horio, October 20, 2014.

<sup>202</sup> Guam and Beyond, September 14, 2014.



1944. However, the notion of rebirth as a prisoner of war encircled many of the prisoners and bolstered their spirits.<sup>203</sup> Did they anticipate death and therefore create them as reminders of happier times? Did they produce these drawings as articles to appease the Allied soldiers guarding them? Did they create them as tokens of appreciation for the soldiers who spared them death? Or did the soldiers' desires for normalcy drive them to use whatever means possible, including their artistic abilities, to produce items of value to serve as currency? Any or all may have motivated the artist and the occupier. Until the Japanese POW artists who created these artworks are located to understand for certain, the answers may very well lie somewhere between them all.

This analysis of Japanese POW drawings during occupation provides guidelines in analyzing other POW drawings created in the same context, through factual identification, evaluation and cultural analysis, and interpretation. Most who own or view these drawings are unaware of the stories they tell or the cultural significance surrounding them. Japanese POW artwork during occupation holds value today not only as surviving souvenirs from Allied soldiers to their mothers and sweethearts back home, or items for trade, but also as Japanese symbols of beauty, cultural expressions, and tokens of rebirth. My own family's drawings hold new meaning for us, as representations of my grandfather's military service, and now as windows into Japanese culture at the start of its reconstruction.

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<sup>203</sup> Gilmore, "We Have Been Reborn," 201-202.



Fig. 0.1



Fig. 0.2

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

秀正書 → Hidemasa or Shūmei  
→ Drawn or painted by



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

