

*The power of culture: a different perspective of the United States-Japan  
alliance in the post-war period*

Ritsumeikan Center for Asia Pacific Studies (RCAPS)  
January 15, 2020

Lecture by

Nassrine AZIMI, PhD  
Senior Advisor, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Hiroshima Office





# RCAPS Onigiri Seminar



**The power of culture: a different perspective of the  
United States-Japan alliance in the post-war period**



***Dr. AZIMI Nassrine***

***United Nations Institute  
for Training and Research (UNITAR),  
Hiroshima Office***

Even before the American occupation of Japan (1945 – 1952) was official, a handful of scholars and experts had gathered in Tokyo by October 1945, “embedded” into the bureaucratic machinery of the Occupation at the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) as the Arts and Monuments Division. Led by brilliant cultural stars such as Harvard curator George L. Stout and the legendary archeologist and Japan scholar Langdon Warner, they worked hand-in-hand with Japanese scholars of art, to strengthen protective measures and laws for Japan’s cultural property, at a time when these were at grave risk in the post-war chaos and misery. This exceptional and unsung work was the result of early and far-sighted work by scholars, but its lessons were forgotten in future wars and occupations.

In her latest book “The United States and Cultural Heritage Protection in Japan 1945-1952” Dr. Azimi analyzes one of the most significant models of post-conflict bilateral relations, to emphasize that in nation-building culture is everything—as much the culture of the occupier as that of the occupied.

**Information of her book:**

<https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463721325/the-united-states-and-cultural-heritage-protection-in-japan-1945-1952>

**Date: Wednesday, January 15, 2020**

**Time: 12:25-14:00**

**Venue: RCAPS Room A (2F B-bldg.)**

**Chair: Prof. FUJII Seiichi APU-APM**

**Discussant: Assistant Prof. ACKARADEJRUANGSRI P.  
APU-APM**

<http://www.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/>

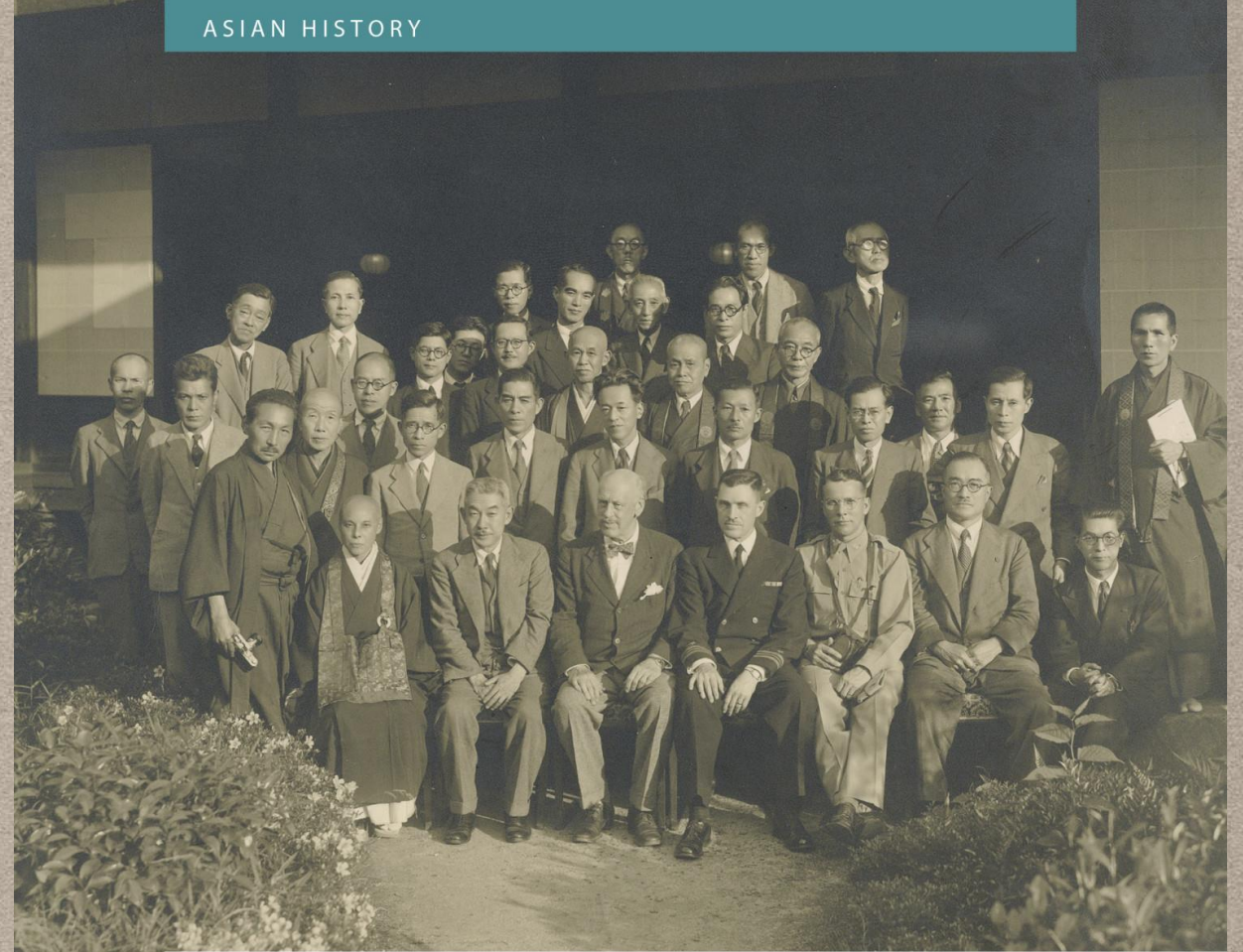




Photos: L. Warner (L) and G. Stout, Monuments Men Foundation

<https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463721325/the-united-states-and-cultural-heritage-protection-in-japan-1945-1952>

ASIAN HISTORY



Nassrine Azimi

## The United States and Cultural Heritage Protection in Japan (1945-1952)

Amsterdam  
University  
Press



## **Some background:**

- 1. My prior work and research in various post-conflict countries, from Cambodia (1994) to East Timor - what repercussions Cultural Understanding—or lack thereof — had on rebuilding? And Hiroshima and its post-conflict reconstruction history (comparative perspective); International City of Peace and Culture?**
- 2. Cultural understanding is more than mere intelligence gathering...Cultural heritage protection, from perspective of international peace-keeping and peace-building, maybe the best investment, provides a sense of pride and dignity, continuity of a community/nation in spite of devastations of war and conflict.**
- 3. Questions of IDENTITY... As an Irano/Swiss/American...always a foreigner, a personal quest. \_From PERSIA to NARA...ASIA, Silk Road - the power of culture yet to be explored, not just religious or ideological dogma....not just Islam, but what kind of Islam/Christianity/Judaism etc etc?**
- 4. Myriad further research needed to fill gaps...not explore only cultural or war history -- but understand why culture, in the broad sense (understanding and protecting), so often ignored - or treated as a luxury or trivial?**



Some of my book's premises:

American policy makers during WWII/Pacific War: far from perfect- FDR and MacArthur both clearly race-conscious, maybe even racist; even Sansom (intelligence), Grew, Borton...; commentary of officials in debates about the Japanese jarring to our modern ears...till the end there were those who thought more harshly of Imperial Japan than of Nazi Germany... yet personal sentiments and official policies were different ...responsibility, and professionalism.

In the case of Japan Americans considered Religion alongside Culture (also in Occupation policies/structure), more closely study repercussions... and try and understand echoes for today, the manner Islam is depicted in media, or the never-ending 'War on Terror' advanced?

Role and influence of collegial and scholarly partnerships, & influence of politicians like Yamamoto Yūzo on passage of the 1950 Law deserve more studies, for non-Japanese especially, to understand what occurred.



Table 3. The Sixteen Most Popular Books of American Japan Experts

| # times cited | Author               | Title   | Year |
|---------------|----------------------|---|------|
| 7             | Sir George Sansom    | Japan: A Short Cultural History                               | 1931 |
| 6             | Hugh Byas            | Government by Assassination                                   | 1942 |
| 5             | Hugh Byas            | The Japanese Enemy: His Power and Vulnerability               | 1942 |
| 5             | Charles B. Fahs      | Government in Japan: Recent Trends in Its Scope and Operation | 1940 |
| 5             | Daniel C. Holtom     | Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism                           | 1943 |
| 4             | George C. Allen      | Japan, The Hungry Guest                                       | 1938 |
| 4             | Hugh Borton          | Japan Since 1931: Its Political and Social Development        | 1940 |
| 4             | Kenneth W. Colegrove | Militarism in Japan   | 1936 |
| 4             | Shidzué Ishimoto     | Facing Two Ways: the Story of my Life                         | 1935 |
| 4             | Hillis Lory          | Japan's Military Masters: The Army in Japanese Life           | 1943 |
| 4             | Harold G. Moulton    | Japan: An Economic and Financial Appraisal                    | 1931 |
| 4             | E. Herbert Norman    | Japan's Emergence as a Modern State                           | 1940 |
| 4             | John E. Orchard      | Japan's Economic Position: The Progress of Industrialization  | 1930 |
| 4             | Harold S. Quigley    | Japanese Government and Politics: an Introductory Study       | 1932 |
| 4             | Robert K. Reischauer | Japan: Government and Politics                                | 1939 |
| 4             | Otto D. Tolischus    | Tokyo Record  | 1943 |



# Organising the Occupation

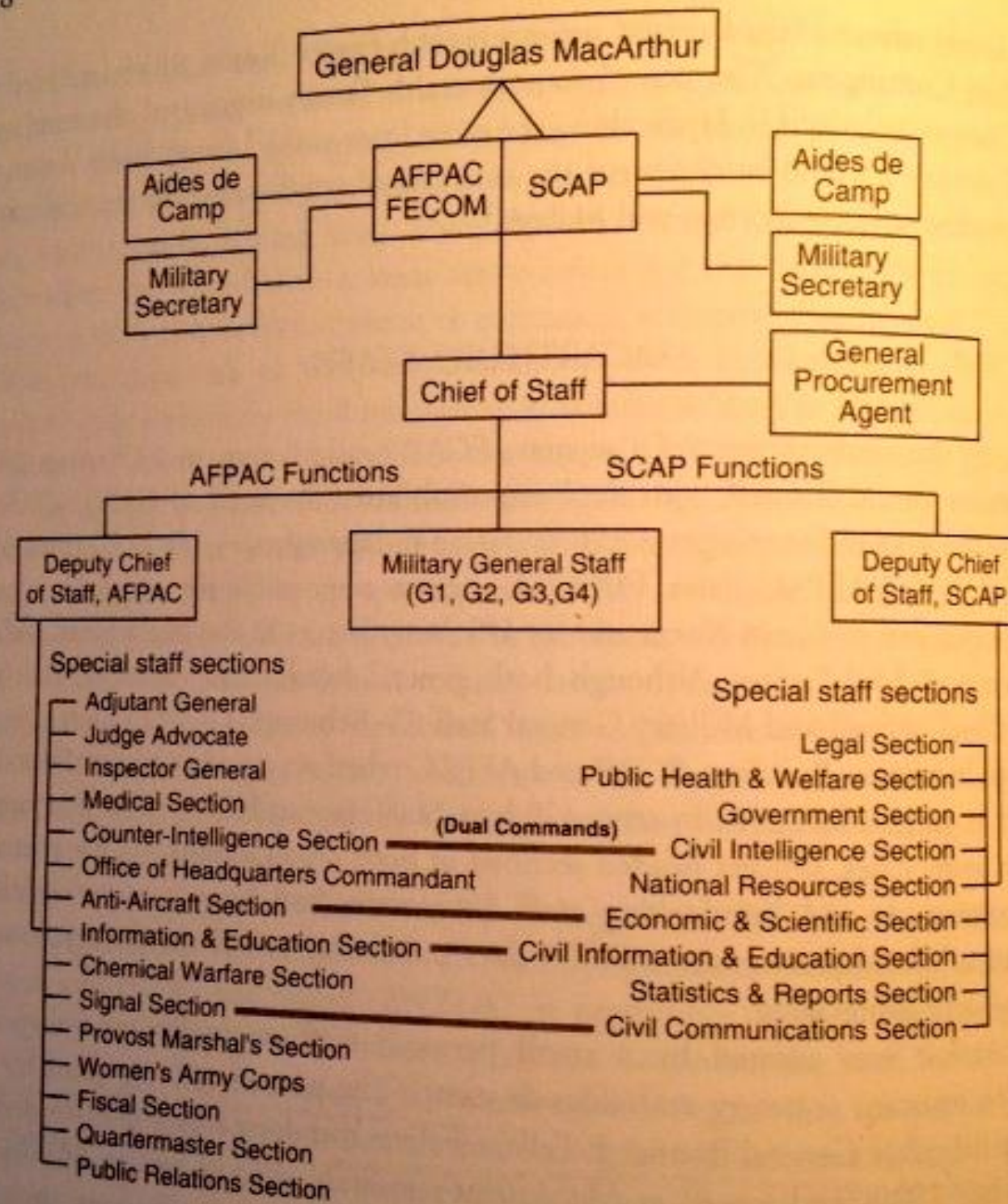


Figure 8. The dual structure of the occupation (January 1946).





Soldiers pose with a looted painting by Manet discovered in a mine by men of the U.S. Army's 90th Division April 7, 1945. Courtesy John Provan



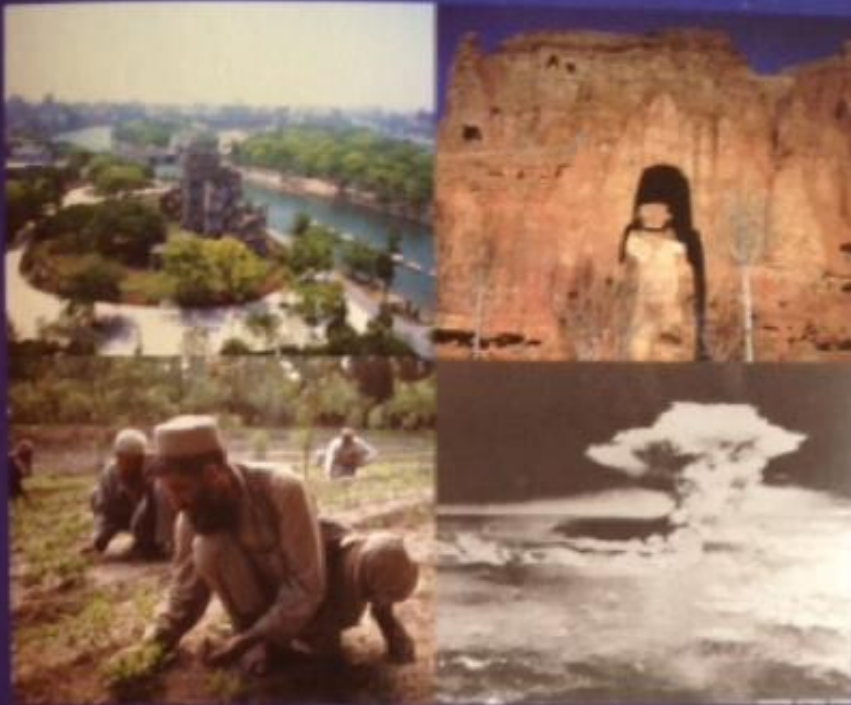
Sherman Lee, courtesy Seattle Museum of Art

- **George L. Stout** -- Conservator Fogg Museum, Harvard U., first head and then advisor to A&M
- **Langdon Warner** -- Famed archeologist and scholar, Fogg Museum, Harvard U., advisor to A&M
- **Sherman Lee** -- became Curator Oriental Art, Seattle, and then curator and director of Cleveland Museum of Art, staff of A&

*This succession of distinguished scholars, the personal influences that they shared, the empathy that each had for the Japanese people and their art as demonstrated by their vocational commitments and personal efforts, and the unbroken intellectual lineage harkening back to Morse, Fenollosa, and Okakura, was the vehicle through which the West in general, and the United States in particular, significantly impacted the cultural property perspectives of Japan.*

*Geoffrey Scott, 'Cultural Property Laws of Japan' 2003*





# Post-Conflict Reconstruction

In Japan, Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, East Timor and Afghanistan

Proceedings of an International Conference Hiroshima, November 2002

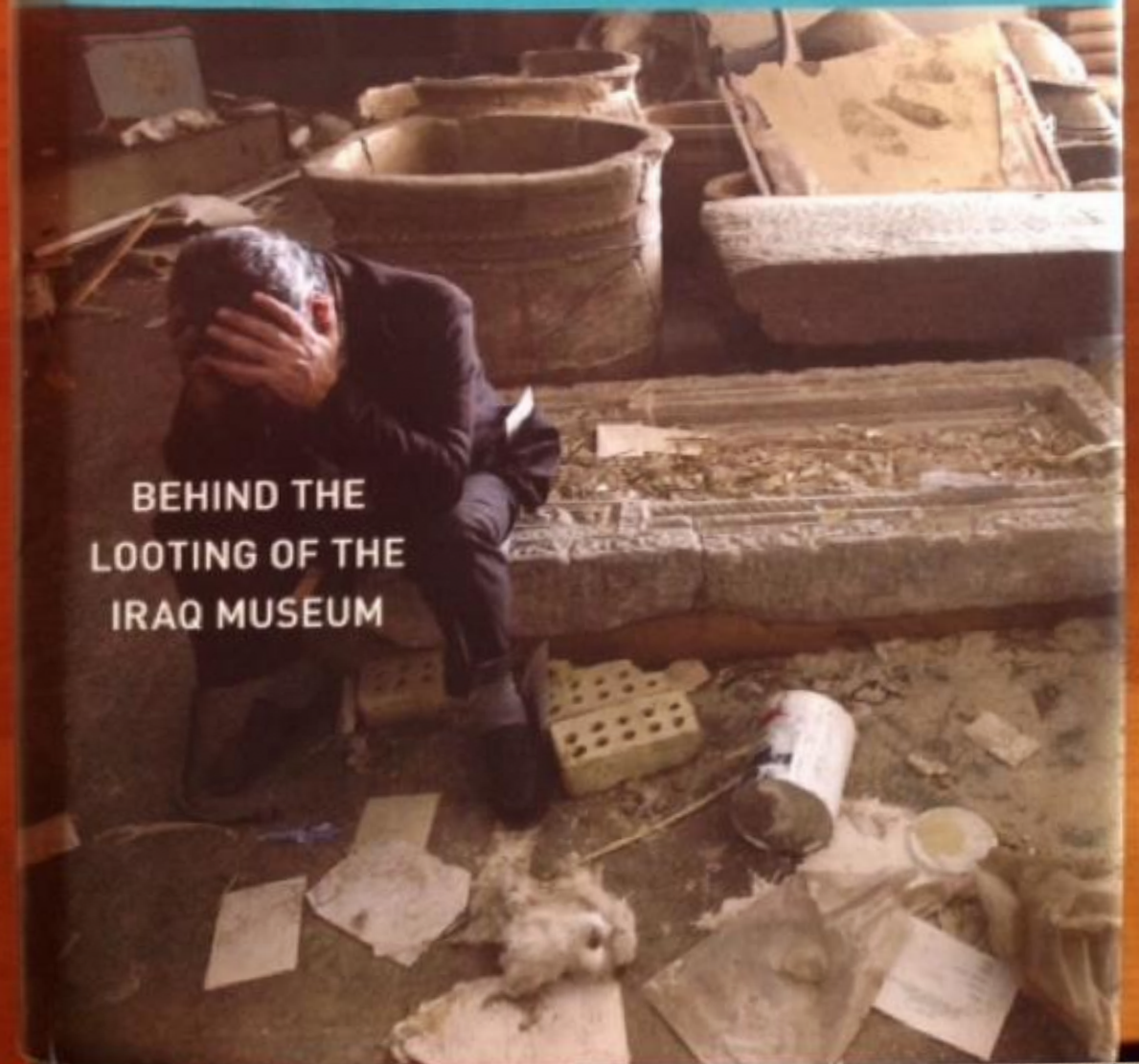
Edited by Nassrine Azimi, Matt Fuller, Hiroko Nakayama



UNITED NATIONS

*Lawrence  
Rothfield*

## THE RAPE OF MESOPOTAMIA



BEHIND THE  
LOOTING OF THE  
IRAQ MUSEUM



## *COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: CASES OF AFGHANISTAN and IRAQ*

- Arts and Monuments, Culture and Tradition: 20th century occupations, wars, revolutions and neglect...*
- The United States and pre-occupation preparations: influence of academic specialists?*
- Cultural policies and practices under United States-led/international Occupations*

*For Afghanistan, there was no systematic and sustained effort in Washington to understand the society prior to war and occupation. Once the actual invasion started, the United States [...] left all other tasks to a host of international players. These players, fragmented, resource-poor, with short-term mandates, never had the same carrying capacity in terms of embedding culture, cultural understanding and cultural heritage protection in the occupation regime. For the U.S. military – the single most important player in the early months and years of occupation – culture was simply an overlooked, orphan child. Finally, any substantial resources that could have been earmarked to culture later disappeared once the war in Iraq started.*



## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS:

### **Start thinking ‘culture’ early:**

Early (1942 or even 1940...), broad (involved US Departments of State, War, Army and Navy, OSS, OWI, and many universities research think-tanks etc), and multifaceted (included opposing views) occupation planning and policies. What motivated American policy makers to even think about Japan culturally, in the midst of an all-out war, and then to prioritize the protection of the enemy’s cultural property upon victory? The Americans could have decided they had no obligation for cultural heritage protection in Japan – yet they set up policies and plans for this purpose, allocating precious time and resources to the endeavor: why (ability to think complex thoughts...Fitzgerald?!)?

### **Institutions and individuals matter:**

The very creation of the Roberts Commission itself during WWII was the result of a particular political and social environment, and of a far more intricate and sustained mobilization of America’s best institutions and able individuals for the war effort, as referred to earlier. This occurred from the early stages of hostilities, from June 1940 and the fall of Paris [...] the American Defense-Harvard Group, as well as the American Council of Learned Societies. The involvement of these groups also reflected a certain respect for and influence allowed to scholarly community by political powers that be (and vice versa).

But as we have also seen, throughout this study, there was human excellence, and commitment to culture, and a certain continuity of personal bonds and scholarly friendships, a legacy carried from one generation of scholars to another ....

### **Culture and cultural understanding essential, even (more so?) in times of war and conflict:**

[...] GHQ/SCAP, even before being formally established, had defined a cultural policy, as noted in the August 29, 1945 memorandum sent to the Secretary of War, and the official posture of the Occupation and that of the Supreme Commander with regard to [the] protection of and respect for Japan’s cultural heritage. But these sentiments were not enough – an institutional locus was necessary [...] swiftly a cluster, then an actual division within the Civil Information and Education Section of SCAP, in the form of the Arts and Monuments Division, was dedicated to the task. The experts and scholars who converged around it, both its American and Japanese staff [...] pragmatism and no-nonsense manner with which they set out to inspect, categorize, repair and protect cultural heritage leaves one with great admiration – and despair, thinking just how amateurish and inconsequential similar efforts were in Afghanistan and Iraq.



*THANK YOU*

*Q&A*