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J.A.A. Stockwin (trans.), Japan's Postwar. New York: Nissan
Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies, 2011**

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Following the 1945 defeat of Japan at the conclusion of the Second World War, Japan experienced a partial redefinition of its national identity. Significantly included in this redefinition was Japan's negotiation of the long-standing contradiction between traditional Japanese culture and foreign cultures (and their industrial capitalisms), from which Japan selectively incorporated particular. This collection of essays (originally published in 2007 as *Le Japon après la guerre*) is concerned with how to chronologically delimit and conceptually define the postwar period in Japan. Such attempts are made most directly in Eric Seizelet's essay, "The Postwar as a Political Paradigm," but the collection as a whole provides reflection on how to mark divisions in time. Unlike Europe, which can plausibly point to the end of its postwar period as coinciding with the end of the Cold War, Japan can point to no such clear conclusion. The postwar period in Japan is often considered to have ended in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with the establishment of the "1955 system"¹ of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) rule, the revised Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, and the takeoff of the Japanese economy. It could alternatively be dated to Japan's asset bubble burst in the early 1990s and the resulting economic stagnation. However, as Michael Lucken argues in his Introduction, the notion of a "postwar" period is a shifting, indistinct concept that is often employed for political purposes and "...cannot be taken as a simple period of time. It is plural and complex. It is a network of historical time-periods..." (5).

Challenging simplistic categorizations of the postwar period in Japan is the stated goal of Emmanuel Lozerand's essay on three intellectuals writing in the years immediately following the defeat: Sakaguchi Ango, Takeda Taijun, and Takeuchi Yoshimi. Despite their political differences, all three thinkers shared a focus on "negative" existential experiences—those that are not to be resolved but rather followed "to the end," towards a genuinely transformative experience. This notion is Nietzschean but also distinctly Japanese. (Takeda and Sakaguchi were both strongly influenced by Buddhism.) All three disparaged the results of militarism but also shared misgivings about the postwar period, which Sakaguchi labeled "decadent" in 1946.

Eddy Dufourmont's essay on Yasuoka Masahiro similarly challenges oversimplifications of postwar intellectuals' thought. Dufourmont contends that Yasuoka, generally labeled a fascist, was a complex and pragmatic thinker who did embrace fascism in the early 1930s but moved towards elitist nationalism throughout the 1930s. Yasuoka was an expert on Confucian philosophy and was connected with Hu Shi, Liang Shuming, and Kang Youwei. Although he endorsed the pan-Asianist rhetoric of the war, he was also a fan of Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) and opposed the Japanese military's conduct in China. After the war, Yasuoka maintained ties with the political right but also built ties with liberals like Yoshida Shigeru and was central to Japan's New Life Movement Association.² He almost certainly helped write the August 15

¹ Defined primarily by the merger of the Japan Democratic Party and Liberal Party, leading to the formation of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has remained in power against a weak Socialist opposition since 1955 (except for two brief periods including in 1993-1994 and 2009-2012).

² Although arguably influenced by the Chinese New Life Movement launched under the Guomindang in the mid-1930s, the postwar Japanese New Life Movement also drew on indigenous pre-war initiatives and had a larger grassroots element than the highly-politicized Chinese movement. .

Declaration³ and saw the postwar period as an opportunity for Japan to “cleanse its shame” and become an ethical exemplar to the world, based on Confucian values.

Jacques Joly’s essay on Maruyama Masao shows that postwar reevaluations of Japanese identity and ethics from the left were likely to lead to the formation of views similar to that of Yasuoka. Maruyama stressed the importance of pacifism and democracy as the keys to autonomy, though for him this was both national autonomy in the geopolitical environment of the early Cold War and personal autonomy against social conformity and the state (Yasuoka would consider such individualism foreign to Japanese culture).

The positions adopted by postwar Japanese intellectuals had their equivalents in the artistic community. Karine Arneodo argues that the *Arechi* (Waste Land) group of poets conveyed the silence and non-communicability of defeat and death as an attempt to create the basis for a new, non-ideological ethics opposed to the subordination of the individual into a totalizing collective (especially by using the rhetoric of death as a sacrifice for the nation), echoing Maruyama’s notion of autonomy. The poet Ishihara Yoshirō also dealt with questions of the non-communicability of experience and ethics in the first decades after defeat. Ishihara spent the war as an intelligence officer in Manchuria and suffered eight difficult years in a Soviet labor camp in Siberia after the war. He began writing poetry intently only upon his return to Japan, “speaking silence” for the *Siberia-gaeri*, who were treated with indifference and suspicion on their return to Japan.

Three essays deal with institutional “regimes of memory” in the arts. Anne Bayard-Sakai’s essay on the Akutagawa Prize explains how the jury for the prize unenthusiastically chose novels that did not directly deal with the war and defeat, or awarded no prize at all, before fully embracing the genre of *apure gēru*⁴ in 1950-51. Michael Lucken’s essay examines the history of the Nagasaki Statue for Peace, built by Kitamura Seibō in 1955. Lucken explores the symbolism of the statue, which likely incorporates influences from Buddhism and Japanese popular religion but which was also intentionally designed to express a broadly intelligible humanism. The Neo-Dadaist group Action Art, examined by Anne Gossot, tried but evidently failed to turn the page on the postwar period, as their genesis was clearly influenced by the political context of late 1950s Japan.

Four essays in the collection can be classified as social or institutional history, using a long-term approach. Christian Galan’s essay on postwar education traces the decades-long battles between the proponents of “democratic education” and the conservative advocates of a curriculum that inculcated a (now-pacifist) “Japanese spirit.” The 1947 Fundamental Law on Education⁵ set the basis for postwar education but ran into challenges soon after being enacted, both because of cultural differences between the occupiers and the Japanese and because of the strengthened position of conservatives from the late 1940s. According to Galan, education from the late 1950s through the 1970s was above all focused on fostering economic growth by providing students with technical skills. The law was amended by the Koizumi government in 2006, ostensibly to reduce public expenditures and include more choice for parents but also to please nationalists who had opposed the law all along. Galan sees it as telling that the 2006

³ On August 15, 1945 Emperor Hirohito gave a recorded radio address officially declaring the surrender of Japan to the Allies.

⁴ Borrowed from the French phrase *Après-guerre* (“postwar”).

⁵ The Fundamental Law of Education, first passed in 1947, replaced the pre-1945 Imperial Rescript on Education, which was based on nationalist and Neo-Confucian ideology.

reform was passed on the same day that the Defense Agency was renamed the Ministry of Defense, signaling a gradual move away from the postwar system.

Brice Fauconnier plumbs the Allied General Headquarters' (GHQ)⁶ archives (as Japanese archives of the purges are still not open) to make a revealing comparison between the purges of militarists immediately following the war and the red purges of 1949-1952. Fauconnier shows that the number of individuals purged as Communists was much smaller than the number of rightists purged, though most purged rightists were quickly "depurged" in the following years. Interestingly, neither purge was guided by classification according to political activity; instead, guidelines for purging were couched in bureaucratic language ("administrative reorganization," "limitation of personnel") and opaque criteria that categorized subversion in terms of "usefulness," "enthusiasm," and "diligence" at work. Bernard Thomann's essay on labor relations in the 1950s-1960s also provides a more complex picture of Japanese politics in the postwar period by dispelling not only the Marxist interpretations that the "failure" of the postwar labor movement was the result of an alliance of corporate and state interests but also the claims of neoliberal critics, who argue that labor's postwar "privileges" were the brainchild of Marxist central planners. Thomann instead argues that the postwar relationship between labor and capital grew out of "a corporatist and familial social politics," having originated in the 1920s and being heavily promoted during the war as an alternative to both socialism and economic liberalization. This carried over into postwar middle class ideals and relations between families, firms, and the state.

Paul Jobin's essay also deals with postwar labor relations, though his focus is on drawing unexpected connections between the labor and environmental movements. In the 1990s, long-established Japanese firms were beset by lawsuits, filed both by workers who had been mistreated in their wartime factories and by individuals and communities suffering from the effects of industrial pollution. In some cases, these two concerns co-existed, as some wartime workers developed diseases after the war, presumably because of exposure to chemicals. These coinciding concerns also appeared in the community unions of the 1980s that opposed industrial pollution and campaigned for pacifism and recognition of Japan's wartime atrocities, including the mistreatment of industrial workers (especially Koreans). For Jobin, these unexpected connections reflect the Japanese left's attempt to write its own history of a war in which it was largely complicit by adopting the wider "victim consciousness" regarding the atomic bomb, which sensitized postwar Japan to victims of industrial pollution.

Taken as a whole, these essays provide important though uneven contributions to our understanding of postwar Japan. As the original essays were published in 2007, the authors could not have incorporated a discussion of subsequent events, including the brief rise and fall of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ),⁷ the 2011 earthquake/tsunami, the resulting Fukushima disaster, and Japan's increasingly acrimonious relations with China. It seems quite possible that Japan is moving into a post-postwar era, and just as the postwar was defined by a repudiation of the perceived factors that led to the war, any post-postwar order would likely involve a partial or complete repudiation of postwar values. One can only hope that this will not entail a return of chauvinistic nationalism to the mainstream of Japanese politics.

⁶ Following World War II, Japan was under the military and political control of the United States and its allies for a period of over six years and was subject to the authority of Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur and his successor, General Matthew Ridgway, and the offices of the General Headquarters (GHQ) under SCAP.

⁷ The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) was founded in 1998 by the merger of several parties opposed to the [Liberal Democratic Party](#) (LDP). Although the DPJ became the ruling party in the House of Representatives in 2009, it lost badly in the 2012 general elections to a resurgent LDP.

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