

Japan and Methamphetamine: the Afterlife of Occupation and the Hiropon Age

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I. Introduction

The Hiropon Age, a methamphetamine crisis lasting from 1952 to 1956, was Japan's first major drug epidemic, birthed from a combination of a wartime push by domestic pharmaceutical manufacturers to promote hiropon (methamphetamine) as a productivity enhancer, a general sense of cynicism inspired by Japan's morale-crushing defeat in World War II, and a complete lack of governmental oversight related to over-the-counter sale of the substance. When the Occupation government, or Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (hereafter, "SCAP"), assumed control of the nation in 1945, the crisis was in its developing stages. However, instead of regulating hiropon sale and consumption in the early Occupation period, when it would have likely been most effective in premeditating the crisis, SCAP passed legislation which focused on American geopolitical ambitions related to eliminating Japan as a narcotics facilitator in the Asian Narcoeconomy.¹ Furthermore, SCAP thoroughly decentralized and disarmed the Japanese government to the point where even those narcotics control laws that ignored hiropon could not be enforced to an effective degree.

Subsequently, when SCAP withdrew from Japan in 1952, the Japanese government was ill-equipped to combat the national hiropon crisis through top-down narcotics control law enforcement and public health initiatives alone, given that the power of arrest had only recently been returned to the national police force and hospitalization resources were sparse. However, the Hiropon Age subsided only four years later in 1956, after Japan's return to economic

¹ M. Douglas Anglin, Cynthia Burke, Brian Perrochet, Ewa Stamper, Samia Dawud-Noursi, "History of the Methamphetamine Problem," in *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 32, no. 2, 138
H. Richard Friman, *Narcodiplomacy: Exporting the U.S. War on Drugs* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996) 63-64

It was estimated that, among Japanese youth ages 16-25, 5% were recreational hiropon users. It is possible that, had SCAP included hiropon in their initial approach to narcotics control (see "The Narcotics Control Law and The Cannabis Control Act"), youth usage would not have grown as rapidly or as severely as it did.

solvency and effective nationwide anti-heroin campaigns facilitated by the media and grassroots government organizations. Despite the fact that many of SCAP's narcotics control laws had proven to be ineffective safeguards of Japanese public health, these laws passed during the occupation period still exist today. Their archaic and rigid nature prevent such progressive efforts as legal medical use of marijuana.

Drugs and Governance

It is important to examine the basic properties of methamphetamine as a means of differentiating it from opiates, which is a core reason why methamphetamine addiction was overlooked for so long in the early postwar period. Methamphetamine was initially synthesized by a Japanese chemist, Nagai Nagayoshi, in 1888.² The substance was originally intended to emulate the effects of ephedrine, popularly used as a bronchodilator, easing respiratory and pulmonary issues. However, while methamphetamine was effective as a bronchodilator, it was found to produce intense psychoactive effects when consumed outside the context of an inhaler.³⁴ Users of methamphetamine are likely to experience an increase in energy, a heightened sense of awareness, loss of appetite, euphoria and an increased heart rate. After an extended period of consistent use, recreational users are known to sleep for days and operate in a "severely depressed" state. Occasionally, consistent users will experience bouts of temporary psychosis.⁵

The potential to chemically re-energize, motivate and reduce the appetite of soldiers made the combat implementation of methamphetamine an extremely attractive prospect to both Axis and Allied powers. In the early stages of World War II, when German pharmaceutical companies were initially publishing research on the potential positive effects of

² Bert Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story: Japan and the Methamphetamine Problem." *Japan Forum* 27, no. 4 (2015) 519-543

³ Arthur K. Cho, "Ice: A New Dosage Form of an Old Drug," in *Science* 249, no. 4969 (1990): 631

⁴ Miriam Kingsberg, "Methamphetamine Solution: Drugs and the Reconstruction of Nation in Postwar Japan," in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, no. 1 (2013) 142

⁵ Ibid

methamphetamine in manufacturing and military efforts, the Japanese government mobilized their own methamphetamine distribution efforts.⁶ By December 1941, tablets consisting of methamphetamine and green tea powder -and stamped with the emperor's official crest- were given to pilots and signal corps members.⁷ These tablets, dubbed *totsugekijou* or *tokkoujou* or "the storming tablet," were distributed as a means of keeping these soldiers awake and alert for long periods of time.^{8 9}

Mass distribution of methamphetamine was not, moreover, limited to the military during the 1940s. In the same year that "the storming tablet" was introduced to the Japanese military, methamphetamine was introduced to the domestic Japanese pharmaceutical market with virtually no commercial restrictions.¹⁰ For civilian use, methamphetamine became known by the more marketable moniker "hiropon," combining the Greek words for love and labor, *philo* and *ponos*.¹¹ In accordance with such a name, hiropon was marketed to workers and students to ward

⁶ Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story," 522

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Norman Ohler, *Blitzed: Drugs in the Third Reich* (New York City, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018) 187-192 Ohler, despite jumping to certain conclusions and maintaining a somewhat sensationalistic tone throughout his text, has collected a number of important resources related to the relevance of stimulants in World War II. In this paper, I am only drawing upon his information related to the use of stimulants in the greater German army rather than his account of Hitler's own stimulant habits.

Marian W. Fischman, "Amphetamines," *Encyclopedia of Drugs, Alcohol and Addictive Behavior*, 2nd ed. (Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2001)

Combat use of methamphetamine was by no means limited to the Japanese among the Axis powers. During World War II, the German military experimented with the distribution of stimulant compounds as a means of keeping soldiers awake and energized for a period of time, while also "boosting confidence." There was a mad dash at the end of the war in the German military to synthesize a substance which could give soldiers the edge in combat. Pervetin, another stimulant, was the most commonly used in active-duty soldiers and shared the same primary active ingredient with methamphetamine. The German military also experimented with a substance called D IX which contained 5mg of Eukodal, 5mg of cocaine, and 3mg of methamphetamine. Upon testing this substance, however, it was found that well-rested soldiers displayed "shaky hands and a brief euphoria," while those who were already exhausted experienced "weak knees and tautness in muscles." After D IX, German military scientists began experimenting instead on prisoners in their concentration camps. The results they found in doing so were similarly unproductive in finding a "miracle drug." The Allied powers likely engaged in similar experiments to the Nazis, given their own usage of stimulants in combat. Marian W. Fischman notes that as many as 200 million methamphetamine tablets were manufactured by the United States military and distributed among American troops in wartime. During World War II up through the Korean War, despite reports confirming that methamphetamine use in combat resulted in postwar addiction problems.

¹⁰ Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story: Japan and the Methamphetamine Problem" 522-23

¹¹ Ibid, 522

off “tiredness” and “mental problems.”¹² The substance was portrayed as a productivity enhancer at a time when high productivity was demanded by the national war effort. There was very little public knowledge related to the addictive properties of the substance at the time of its introduction to the Japanese pharmaceutical market.¹³ Hiropon became so popular that, at peak production, the substance was being synthesized and distributed by more than twenty Japanese pharmaceutical companies.¹⁴

After the successful U.S. “Island Hopping” campaign in the Pacific Theatre and use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan unconditionally surrendered to the Allied military in 1945. In addition to extreme inflation, critical resource shortages, and a collapse of national identity in the years following surrender, Japan was also on the cusp of its first major drug epidemic. After hiropon’s widespread use within the military and successful pharmaceutical marketing campaigns, which codified hiropon as a legitimate productivity enhancer, reports of abuse began to increase.¹⁵

The United States Occupation government led by General Douglas MacArthur, known as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or SCAP, assumed control over the island nation, promising systemic reinvention. Many Japanese people welcomed such a reinvention following the horrific actions in Asia of the imperial military and the central government’s domestic inability to provide critical resources for its citizenry.¹⁶ While SCAP followed through with its intention to fundamentally reform the structure and ideology of the Japanese state, SCAP’s agenda regarding public health was based on American priorities rather than the welfare of the Japanese people. A key facet of this agenda was eliminating Japan as the “Asian middleman” in

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid, p. 523

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Erdstrom, “The Forgotten Success Story,” 523-4

¹⁶ John W. Dower, Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II (New York City, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 40

Asia's prewar narco economy.¹⁷¹⁸ SCAP drafted a series of laws to be executed by the then subordinated Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare that aimed at eliminating the production, trafficking, sale and use of substances which were targeted by the American government including opium, heroin, cocaine, and marijuana.¹⁹

These laws were successful at eliminating those specific substances and instilling a cultural stigma against recreational drug use. However, they neglected to address the rapidly developing national heroin epidemic. Meanwhile, SCAP's decentralization of policing deprived the central Japanese state of a means of enforcing narcotics control laws in the short term. Like American laws of the time, not a single narcotics control law passed in the early Occupation era made mention of any stimulants as controlled substances. SCAP also crippled the national judiciary and law enforcement systems by redirecting most criminal cases to American judges, who claimed authority over cases related to the "objectives of the occupation."²⁰

The dismantling of the national police force due to the prewar and wartime role of the police in enforcing authoritative rule and a U.S.-centered approach to drugs, not only undermined the enforcement of narcotics control laws, but also allowed for the growth of the postwar black market. Born out of necessity for much of Japan's urban population as a means of acquiring critical resources during wartime food shortages, Japan's black markets evolved into a

¹⁷ H. Richard Friman, Narcodiplomacy: Exporting the U.S. War on Drugs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996) 63-64

¹⁸ Dower, Embracing Defeat, 56-61

In the 1930s, the Kwantung army in the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo was a distributor of both opium and heroin in Northern China. The United States had been pushing Japanese lawmakers to institute greater control over Manchurian drug trafficking through international diplomatic channels for years prior to the breakout of WWII. However, Japanese policy-makers at the center were not in control over the actions of their military in the region and, thus, could not reduce the international drug trade stemming from Manchukuo.

¹⁹ See "The Cannabis Control Act," "The Medical Practitioners Act," "The Act on Public Health Nurses, Midwives, and Nurses," as examples of Occupation legislation which included language directed at curbing usage of these substances. Translated versions of these texts exist online at japaneselawtranslation.go.jp.

Friman, Narcodiplomacy: Exporting the U.S. War on Drugs, 65

²⁰ Ibid

major source for hiropon through the early 1950s.²¹ Miriam Kingsberg, in her work *Moral Nation: Modern Japan and Narcotics in Global History*, writes “The addict, a stereotype of powerlessness, was a fitting symbol of a defeated country adrift from its value system.”²² In this sense, the Japanese black market’s transition from critical-resource supplier during wartime and the immediate postwar into a vehicle for Japan’s first major narcotics epidemic in the Occupation era was emblematic of pervasive attitudes among the general public related to defeat.

The national transition from crisis into postwar prosperity could only have occurred once the Occupation era had ended because of SCAP’s strong ties to the underpinnings of the Hiropon Age. In addition to the aforementioned efforts of SCAP to aggressively decentralize the Japanese government and implement narcotics control laws that reflected American priorities, members of SCAP utilized the Japanese black market as a means of liquidating and profiting off of acquired Japanese military hiropon caches.²³

Furthermore, during and after the Occupation era, SCAP and pro-SCAP media outlets utilized the uptick in domestic hiropon use as an ideological weapon in the Cold War by placing responsibility on Chinese, Koreans and Japanese communists to strengthen barriers between Japan and Asia’s communist regimes.²⁴ Such narratives persisted despite the fact that hiropon operations leading up to and during the hiropon crisis were, in large part, domestic “mom and pop” producers who synthesized and sold drugs as an alternative to certain destitution.²⁵ Whether or not this spread of propagandistic narratives related to the hiropon crisis was intentional, given the increasing ideological divide which existed between the U.S. and communist states in the

²¹ Ibid, 69

²² Miriam Kingsberg, *Moral Nation: Modern Japan and Narcotics in Global History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 182

²³ Friman, *Narcodiplomacy*, 65-66

²⁴ Kingsberg, *Moral Nation*, 187

²⁵ Ibid, 183

immediate postwar period, the result was an increase in association between China and heroine within media coverage despite minimal involvement in the substance's production.

In the end, both the U.S. and Japanese states shared responsibility for the occurrence and magnitude of the heroine crisis. Perhaps if the Japanese government had put further restriction on pharmaceutical use of the substance prior to the declaration of a heroine epidemic, there would not have been a mass-addiction event on the scale of the "Heroine Age." Furthermore, if outgoing Japanese military officials had taken better care to track redistributed and surrendered military stock, it is possible that SCAP would have had the resources to take inventory of military heroine on the booming black market.²⁶ However, all of these hypotheticals rely on preventative government action for the purpose of public health which, given postwar national circumstances leading up to the development of the heroine crisis, was unlikely for the weakened Japanese state.

Currently, Miriam Kingsberg, H. Richard Friman, Bert Erdstrom and John Dower are the only Western historians to have touched on Japan's postwar heroine crisis. While such work is important to understanding Japan's postwar methamphetamine crisis, there is very little research related specifically to SCAP's role in shaping the circumstances that allowed such a crisis to occur. In this paper, I am building upon the works of previous historians with an analytical focus on the logistics and regulations of SCAP. By establishing a clearer relationship between the early actions of SCAP and the development of the conditions necessary for the heroine crisis to exist, more broadly, I hope to indicate the importance of work in challenging conventional Western historical narratives to include narco-history and its modern ties to Western ideological imperialism.²⁷

²⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 115-6

²⁷ There is a significant connotational difference between Western scholarly historiography and conventionally accepted Western historical narratives. There have been, and exist today, various Western academics who have

II. Roots of the Crisis

In 1941, it became possible to buy hiropin over the counter in most Japanese pharmacies. The substance was widely advertised to “fight sleepiness and enhance vitality.”²⁸ Such advertisement campaigns were successful and the substance became a top seller domestically.²⁹ When the substance became available in the form of a hypodermic needle injection, popularity further increased largely because needles were seen as both a revolution in modern Western medicine and as having deep roots in Asia through acupuncture.³⁰ Later on, in the occupation period, one SCAP official reportedly remarked that, “The public display and sale of hypodermic needles in even the



Image acquired on March 15th, 2021 from ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/メタンフェタミン. “ヒロピン” reads as “hiropin” in English. The text in the upper-right corner roughly translates to: “stop exhaustion and rehabilitate.”

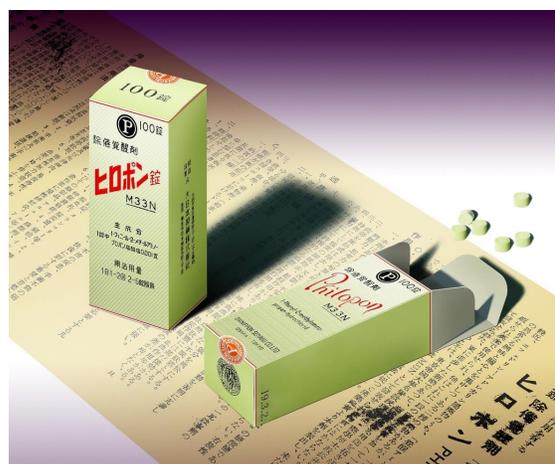


Image acquired on March 15th, 2021 from <https://www.pixiv.net/en/artworks/8780022>. This image depicts hiropin in its over the counter packaging.

contributed important work to the international literature concerning narcotics. However, such work is, unfortunately, underrated and under-taught. The most pervasive believed Western historical narratives outside of the academic community, at least within America, often fail to include any meaningful account of narcotics-related historical phenomena either domestically or internationally. Prior to my writing this paper, I interviewed people of differing educational backgrounds and age groups. I found the following to be true about the state of mainstream Western historical narratives: historical phenomena related to narcotics are rarely taught within the context of secondary education. High school is a critical time for historical education as it is, more often than not, the last time that many students will be taught history in a formal environment. The most specific example of a remembered historical lesson related to narcotics in high school that any one of my interviewees could give was a brief account of the Opium War. Another interviewee had learned a fair amount about the influx of crack cocaine in Black communities during the Reagan Administration while studying as an undergraduate. However, it is worth noting that they were a humanities major in college, which, typically, requires a greater degree of additional historical knowledge than that of STEM fields or those who opt out of higher education. The fact that many Westerners are unaware of both domestic and international narco-history may seem relatively insignificant to most. I would argue that a certain awareness of narco-history is crucial in order to accurately grasp the current geopolitical relationship between the Eastern and Western hemispheres. Given that 19th and 20th century Asian mass-addiction events were connected to modern Western ideological imperialism, a lack of knowledge of such events among Westerners is emblematic of a greater lack in consciousness related to the West’s past and current imperialist engagements.

²⁸ Anglin, Burke, Perrochet, Stamper, Dawud-Noursi, “History of the Methamphetamine Problem,” 138

²⁹ Kingsberg, *Moral Nation*, 183

³⁰ Ibid

most remote small town and their general use by the Japanese [have]... conditioned the Japanese as a people to have no bad association with the hypodermic needle....”³¹

At the time of its market debut and introduction to combat, hiropon had become coded as a substance for the benefit of a “healthier mind.” In this way, hiropon, having been first synthesized by a Japanese chemist and given a marketable name for the purpose of domestic sale, became a major substance in the Japanese pharmaceutical field. These and other aforementioned factors contributed to what would become known as the Hiropon Age. At the same time there was perhaps no greater vehicle for the blossoming public health crisis than the development of the Japanese black market.

The Development of the Japanese Black Market

In 1937, the Japanese government attempted to fully mobilize the nation for all-out war with China following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. Such mobilization efforts dictated that most national economic resources be redirected to the imperial military.

By early 1940, the Japanese government had committed to regulating approximately 100,000 goods, services and materials to combat black market activities and establishing an economic police force (*keizaikeisatsu*) to enforce such regulations. In 1942 the Foodstuffs Control Law was promulgated in an attempt to ward off food shortages during the war. Fruits, vegetables, soy sauce, grains, beans, and potatoes joined the list of goods which were to be regulated by the Japanese state.³² This law also entrusted rationing authority to *tonarigumi* or “neighborhood associations.”³³ Neighborhood associations were usually composed of representatives from ten households in a given, usually urban, neighborhood. Such organizations

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Katarzyna Cwiertka, “Beyond the Black Market: Neighborhood Associations and Food Rationing in Postwar Japan,” in *Japan Since 1945: From Postwar to Post-Bubble*, ed. Chris Gerteis, Timothy George (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 88-103.

were originally intended to carry out lower-level bureaucratic tasks, but had not before undertaken a task as demanding and important as food rationing.³⁴ The methods by which the Japanese state was rationing food were extremely decentralized and likely experienced variations from region to region. Naturally, under such expanding restrictions and unconventional methods of state-provided resource distribution, black market prices for food continued to rise.³⁵

In 1944, when the U.S. military began bombing urban areas, black market prices for food skyrocketed. Whereas, earlier in the war, unregulated and state-mandated prices had remained relatively similar, black market prices for basic resources became more than double the government standard as it became clearer that Japan was nearing defeat.³⁶ Despite such dramatic price hikes, the black market maintained its place as a necessary source for critical resources in the midst of a nationwide food shortage. It was at this moment that prominent Japanese black markets emerged as a method of circumventing government resource regulations and taxation.³⁷ From wartime into the early occupation period, these marketplaces would come to occupy a much more central role in fulfilling basic needs, particularly in regards to food after the war, in most major Japanese cities.

Based on statistics collected by the Institute for the Science of Labor in the summer of 1944, it is estimated that the Japanese adult was consuming (on average) 1927 calories a day. However, the Japanese state had only been providing about 1400 calories per day since the enactment of the Foodstuffs Control Law in 1942. It was also estimated that the average laborer was purchasing 38% of their fish and 69% of their vegetables on the black market.³⁸ Based on this survey data, it is clear that underground commerce was fulfilling a role that the Japanese

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Owen Griffiths, "Need, Greed and Protest in Japan's Black Market, 1938-1949," in *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 4 (2002): 831

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid, 827

³⁸ Ibid, 828

state was incapable of doing itself in the final months of World War II. While it can be argued that black market operations were beneficial to the public health of the Japanese citizenry at this time, the power bestowed upon such operations allowed for their transition into massive hiropon distribution networks in the immediate postwar period.

Shortly after Japan's surrender, black markets fully transitioned from a means of circumventing wartime resource regulation to the main commercial source of a range of resources for much of the Japanese urban population. By October 15th, 1945, the Japanese government was issuing warnings of impending famine and under-reporting crop yields to prepare the nation for an imminent food shortage.³⁹ While this food shortage never quite became a mass starvation event, there were a few high-profile deaths by starvation in the immediate postwar period. The death of Yamaguchi Yoshita, a thirty-three-year-old judge, in 1947 was a particularly poignant illustration of the Japanese state's incompetence in providing for its people. Yoshita was often tasked with passing judgement on those who had illegally bought food on the black market, which included passing sentences on those with repeat offenses.⁴⁰ It was nearly impossible to feed an entire family without partaking in black market food commerce with how little sustenance the Japanese state was capable of providing for its people. Refusing to eat anything above his daily government-provided rations, with a calorie count ranging anywhere from a half to a third of the daily necessary amount for an active adult (approximately 2200 a day), Yoshita died of starvation.⁴¹ At the same time, with the judge's unspoken support, Yoshita's wife and children's health were sustained by food acquired on the black market.⁴² If it were not such a tragic instance of governmental incompetence in protecting the welfare of its

³⁹ Cwiertka, "Beyond the Black Market: Neighborhood Associations and Food Rationing in Postwar Japan," 91

⁴⁰ Dower, Embracing Defeat, 101

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 98

⁴² *Ibid*, 102

people, Judge Yamaguchi Yoshita's death might sound like political satire. Not only was the Japanese state incapable of providing for its people, it was incapable of providing for itself.

Under such conditions, Japanese black market operations continued to widen consistent commercial access to food and other critical resources in urban areas. In 1946 Osaka, for example, city officials estimated that approximately 100,000 people were sustaining themselves via the black market. Of these approximately 100,000, it was estimated that 80% were repatriated soldiers or wartime factory workers whose livelihoods went the way of the Japanese war effort.⁴³

In Tokyo, there existed a similarly important, sophisticated black marketplace run by the Matsuda gang. What began as a small marketplace for petty vendors in front of Shimbashi station rapidly grew into a local institution which began taking on certain matters of public works, such as trash collection, after garnering the support of local police and the Tokyo municipal government.⁴⁴ Urban black marketplaces often provided for the general public where the government failed to and, in this way, were critical to maintaining infrastructure in postwar Japanese cities. Furthermore, black marketplaces were job-creators and, ultimately, major determinants of the national economy. In 1945, it is estimated that Tokyo's various black markets employed approximately 80,000 people in an era of mass unemployment.⁴⁵

The Postwar Liquidation of Military Assets

The asset turnover from the Japanese military to the incoming Occupation forces marked an important point in the development of the Hiropon age. In this brief, transitory period, black market traders acquired enough military assets to force 1946 Minister of Finance to at one point state: "nobody knows where a hundred billion yen worth of stuff has gone to."⁴⁶ While there

⁴³ Ibid, 143-4

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Griffiths, "Need, Greed and Protest...", 834

⁴⁶ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 114

likely exists very little written record related to the transfer of military resources during this period, it can be inferred that, based upon the quantity of military resources acquired by black marketeers and the existence of large military caches among military stocks, military resources made it on to the black market in the formative stages of the crisis.

The process of turning over Japanese military stocks and resources to the Allied forces was bungled for a number of reasons.⁴⁷ The erasure of bureaucratic structure and accountability on the part of outgoing military officials in the postwar and prevalent anti-occupation sentiments within military ranks, however, were likely the greatest contributing factors to the looting of military assets that occurred prior to the arrival of SCAP.⁴⁸ A definitive timeline of resource dumping and transfer is difficult to establish, given the deliberate lack and destruction of record-keeping by outgoing Japanese military officers at the time. The earliest recorded instance of consolidated military asset liquidation occurred on the day of Hirohito's national radio broadcast on August 15th, 1945.⁴⁹ The cabinet, led by Admiral Suzuki Kantaro, who would resign shortly thereafter, issued "Secret Instruction No. 363," which declared that all military resources would be distributed to local governments, private factories, and citizens where appropriate.⁵⁰

Such a command would come to directly contradict the very first directive handed down by SCAP only five days later on August 20th, which stated that military resources were to remain under the control of the Japanese state for the purposes of confiscation by the incoming Occupation forces. However, Prince Higashikuni, the new cabinet head, made no effort to

⁴⁷ The use of the word "bungled" here is somewhat complicated, but not without reason. There existed competing visions between the Japanese military and incoming Occupation forces which gave rise to certain rebellious acts during the postwar transition including the allowed looting of military stocks. However, while there existed intentional acts of transitional sabotage by negligent, outgoing Japanese military officers, I feel it is too strong to imply that the Japanese military knowingly funneled military stocks onto the black market.

⁴⁸ Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, 113-4

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 113

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

maintain military stocks as ordered by SCAP until two days prior to the arrival of General MacArthur.⁵¹ Even then, there was no concentrated effort to regroup or track previously dispersed military resources distributed under “Secret Instruction No. 363.”⁵²

It is now estimated that approximately 70% of the Japanese military’s resources were acquired by civilians in this initial post-surrender frenzy.⁵³ In fact, state-facilitated local distribution of military goods did not so much resemble a government initiative as orderly looting.⁵⁴ John Dower, in *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, writes:

The impression one gains from later investigations into these activities is that during the turbulent two weeks following the emperor's broadcast, a great many men of influence spent most of their waking hours looting military storehouses, arranging hasty payments from the military budget or from the Bank of Japan to contractors and cronies, and destroying documents.⁵⁵

Defeat and repudiation of the militant, nationalist ideals that defined the Japanese national identity through the early 20th century gave rise to a pervasive sense of national cynicism that rigid wartime order quickly transformed into a mad scramble to secure valuable resources before entering into an unprecedented period of foreign leadership.

In Dr. Junichi Saga’s “Confessions of a Yakuza,” he relates stories told to him by a patient and former organized crime-affiliate, Eiji Ijichi. Ijichi recalled one typical example of such looting with a former “big spender,” Saburo Tsukada, at one of his gambling operations. One day, Tsukada walked into the parlor with a large sack of money and told Ijichi he made it from selling goods acquired from the Tsuchiura naval base, home to the largest military stockpile in the nation at the time, where he had been previously conscripted to do “war work.” Tsukada claimed that, after Hirohito’s surrender broadcast, the entire military chain of command

⁵¹ Ibid, 114

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid, 115-6

⁵⁴ Ibid, 113-4

⁵⁵ Ibid, 114

crumbled and the base's resources were subsequently completely distributed and looted over the course of two weeks. While resource distribution was initially limited to military personnel, civilians quickly joined in on the asset liquidation by creating and acting under fake organizations.⁵⁶

SCAP Directive Number Two, issued on September 3rd, 1945, primarily detailed SCAP's requisition of information and resources related to military and civilian affairs. Its final section labeled "miscellaneous," detailed SCAP's intention to confiscate wartime medical caches nationwide, which contained hiropon. The document reads:

The Japanese Government shall... furnish to the Chief Surgeon on the staff of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers the following information:

- A comprehensive description of public health measures... with lists of principal officials, organizations and facilities.
- Last reported status supply of drugs, medicines and other sanitary supplies.⁵⁷

Shortly thereafter, SCAP officials confiscated methamphetamine stockpiles worth approximately ¥10,000,000 from the military and ¥4,000,000 from private firms, an impressive quantity.⁵⁸ However, it is unclear just how much of the military's methamphetamine stock was looted in between surrender and the arrival of General MacArthur. Given the purposeful lack of collaboration between Japanese military leadership and arriving Occupation forces, we know from Dr. Saga's writing that there existed instances where the liquidation of military resources went unreported and the resources were acquired by third parties or organized crime syndicates. It is likely that there existed a much larger store of military methamphetamine stocks prior to such a liquidation.

⁵⁶ Junichi Saga, *Confessions of a Yakuza* (New York City, NY: Kodansha USA, 2013)), 230

This version of Junichi Saga's writing, originally published under the name *Asakusa Bakuto Ichidai* in 1989, is a 2013 reprint for an American readership. I was originally referred to this text through the writing of current Harvard PhD. candidate, Jesus Solis.

⁵⁷ Memorandum, "SCAP Directive Number Two," 3 September 1945, National Diet Library Online Archives, Tokyo, JP

⁵⁸ Friman, *Narcodiplomacy*, 65-66

The narcotics that were successfully confiscated by SCAP during this massive sweep were kept in twelve government storage facilities maintained by the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare.⁵⁹ After initial confiscation, SCAP officially intended to distribute a certain amount of hiropon stock back to the Japanese public through authorized pharmaceutical wholesale houses. In a December 4, 1945 memorandum to the Imperial Japanese Government, SCAP announced their intentions to redistribute hiropon among seven national wholesale facilities. The memorandum further specified that each of these seven facilities would be required to file monthly reports related to on-hand inventory and monthly waste.⁶⁰

Development of Crisis Consciousness

Upon their return, many Japanese WWII combat veterans found that their homes were not at all as they had left them. Sometimes repatriated soldiers would learn that they had long been declared dead and that their wives had remarried.⁶¹ However, such an occurrence was often not the greatest shock for returning Japanese soldiers. In fact, the greatest shock for many was likely feeling like social pariahs. In the June 9th edition of the *Asahi Shimbun*, an anonymous soldier's letter stated that, upon his return home: "Not a single person gave me a kind word. Rather, they cast hostile glances my way. Tormented and without work, I became possessed by a devil."⁶² Of course, this soldier was not literally possessed by a devil, but he began to engage in criminal activity as a means of survival.

This was far from an isolated experience. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the Japanese government had not only engaged in extreme nationalist messaging, but had also tied acts of imperialism to engagement in violent conflict abroad in the name of "war of the spirit."

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Memorandum, "Custody and Distribution of Japanese military Medicinal Narcotic Stocks," 4 December 1945, National Diet Library Online Archives, Tokyo, JP

⁶¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 62

⁶² Ibid, 63

Japan's population had been told by their government that, as the war moved closer to the main island, it might be necessary to fight until the bitter end, dying like "shattered jewels."⁶³ While, of course, Japan was not nearly as united of a front as the famous "shattered jewels" saying would lead one to believe, it is important to recognize that, even despite its somewhat hyperbolic nature, nationalist messaging played a critical role in mobilizing the Japanese people for all-out war.

When Emperor Hirohito's August radio announcement declared that this "war of the spirit" had been lost, it deeply affected national morale. While there had been a fair amount of civil social conflict during wartime, there still existed a powerful consciousness among a large population of the Japanese people related to racial bonds or a "national family." Similar to the total disorder which ensued in the Japanese military postwar, such bonds quickly dissipated and divisions within society widened. Those who had been brutalized by the war, particularly those affected by nuclear bombs, war orphans, war widows and veterans were, in many cases, left by the government to fend for themselves in a radically different social and economic landscape.

In 1947, reports of Japanese soldiers returning from war with stimulant addictions began to surface.⁶⁴ Such addictions were likely only amplified by the weakened national economy, rampant national food shortages in addition to the loss of morale. Furthermore, much of the stigma related to consuming narcotics had been done away with during the war when the Japanese government supplied soldiers and industrial workers alike with methamphetamine tablets.⁶⁵ Without social restrictions related to narcotics consumption in tandem with easy, legal

⁶³ Ibid, 40

⁶⁴ Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story: Japan and the Methamphetamine Problem" 523

⁶⁵ Ibid, 524

access to amphetamines, soldiers found it easy to perpetuate their wartime addictions as they reentered civilian life.⁶⁶

The first recorded cases of methamphetamine abuse among domestic consumers occurred in the early 1940s when it was discovered that one could ingest the cotton plug from hiropon-infused inhalers to experience the substance's psychoactive effects.⁶⁷ The fact that an instance of chemical dependency was recorded before the substance had even reached the domestic market as a consumable that claimed "vitality-enhancement" speaks volumes to the powerfully addictive nature of hiropon. However, full-blown "crisis consciousness" related to Japan's national hiropon epidemic did not start forming until the late 1940s, when it had become clear that Japanese youth were the most vulnerable to such trends.

By 1948, it was estimated that approximately 5% of the Japanese population, ages 16-25, were recreational users of hiropon.⁶⁸ Two years later, a psychiatrist at a Japanese addiction clinic claimed that 80% of those who regularly used hiropon were under the age of 25, and 60% of users were under 20.⁶⁹ This appears to be supported by a survey, with 30% of respondents between the ages 20 and 22 claiming that they had used or experimented with the substance.⁷⁰ From a state perspective, the prospect of an incapacitated, demoralized youth in the midst of total national reconstruction was not conducive for sustainable growth.

There was perhaps no more poignant moment in the development of national crisis consciousness than the "Kyoko-chan Incident." In April of 1954, a 10-year-old girl, Hosoda Kyoko, was raped and murdered by a 20-year-old, a hiropon addict. The focus of the incident's media coverage quickly became the perpetrator's drug abuse, stirring public anger related to

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Cho, "Ice: A New Dosage Form of an Old Drug," 631

⁶⁸ Anglin, Burke, Perrochet, Stamper, Dawud-Noursi, "History of the Methamphetamine Problem," 138

⁶⁹ Kingsberg, *Moral Nation*, 193.

⁷⁰ Ibid

Japan's hiropon problem, reinforcing a narrative of addicts as simultaneous perpetrators and victims of "moral menace."⁷¹ Media coverage made the optics of a drug-dependent, vulnerable youth impossible to ignore.

In a similar vein, the rise of widely publicized stimulant-related deaths further incensed the development of crisis consciousness. In the early postwar period, the deaths of comedian Miss Wakana (1946) and novelist Oda Sakunosuke (1948) were not necessarily reported as hiropon-related deaths, but as heart attacks. However, it was widely known that both were consistent users of hiropon.⁷² Such deaths within the Japanese arts community were not isolated incidents: celebrated writers Dazai Osamu, Sakaguchi Ango and Tanaka Hidemitsu died under similar circumstances.⁷³

Early Occupation legislative approaches to narcotics control

From the beginning of Japan's Occupation era, it was clear that SCAP intended to reform and transform the Japanese state's ideology and priorities related to domestic narcotics control. Their first action was an effective ban on the domestic manufacture of pharmaceuticals. Such a ban was reinforced by the breaking up of many prominent Japanese pharmaceutical manufacturing companies, such as Mitsui and Mitsubishi.⁷⁴ Shortly thereafter, SCAP undercut the Japanese government's ability to enforce narcotics control laws by granting Occupation courts authority over all matters constituting the "objectives of the occupation." This shift in legal authority coupled with SCAP's disarmament and decentralization of the Japanese police force made it difficult to arrest violators of narcotics control laws.⁷⁵ There were only about 200 agents in the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare to whom SCAP had delegated the task of

⁷¹ Ibid, 194

⁷² Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story," 524

⁷³ Kingsberg, Moral Nation, 184

⁷⁴ Friman, Narcodiplomacy, 65

⁷⁵ Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story: Japan and the Methamphetamine Problem" 525

enforcing national narcotics control laws. Yet these agents had no powers of arrest until 1947, two years after the initial Occupation.⁷⁶

The first hospitalization related to stimulant addiction occurred in September of 1946.⁷⁷ The rapid, widespread rise of stimulant use in the following years can be largely attributed to those previously established underpinnings, including the destruction of national morale in defeat, successful domestic pharmaceutical campaigns that promoted the substance as a method of improving productivity, the lack of restriction related to the substance's sale, and booming black market operations nationwide.⁷⁸ All of such factors were clearly identifiable in the occupation era as indicators of a potential health crisis. However, SCAP focused completely on the control of American-designated "problem substances."⁷⁹

From 1946 to 1948, the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare introduced a series of drug-control measures based on two U.S. pieces of legislation: The Harrison Narcotics Act and the 1937 "Marijuana Tax Act." This legislation prioritized the control of opium, heroin, marijuana and cocaine without making any explicit mention of stimulants, let alone hiropon or methamphetamine.⁸⁰ These control measures, eventually consolidated into the 1948 "Narcotics Control Law and Cannabis Control Act," prohibited opium cultivation and import, increased penalties for breaching such prohibitions, and introduced restrictions on marijuana production, sale, import and cultivation.⁸¹ SCAP's interest in curbing the cultivation, trafficking and usage of these substances in particular was primarily motivated by a desire to cut the hitherto middleman,

⁷⁶ Friman, *Narcodiplomacy*, 65

⁷⁷ Masayuki Tamura, "Japan: Stimulant Epidemics Past and Present," *National Research Institute of Police Science* (Tokyo: 1989)

⁷⁸ Friman, *Narcodiplomacy*, 63-65

Kingsberg, *Moral Nation*, 183

⁷⁹ Friman, *Narcodiplomacy*, 66

⁸⁰ *Ibid*

⁸¹ *Ibid*

"The Cannabis Control Act," (japaneselawtranslation.go.jp, Tokyo, 1948)

Japan, out of the Asian narco economy. In other words, SCAP narcotics-control laws were drafted as a means of accomplishing American geopolitical initiatives rather than providing Japan with the necessary infrastructure to deal with its own drug problems. Such laws were thus ineffective in the face of Japan's postwar stimulant epidemic.⁸²

It also is in these and other early Occupation-era laws enacted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare that a pattern began to emerge related to the Japanese state's SCAP-influenced definition of an "addict." In the 1948 "Cannabis Control Act," it is specified that an "addict of narcotics, cannabis or opium" was ineligible to receive a "cannabis handler license."⁸³ Similar restrictions existed in both the 1948 "Medical Practitioners Act" and 1948 "The Act on Public Health Nurses, Midwives, and Nurses" specifying that "addicts of narcotics, cannabis, or opium" are ineligible to hold certain positions of authority.⁸⁴

It is clear, based on the omission of stimulants in association with the "addict," that these Ministry of Health and Welfare acts overlooked hiropon's addictive properties, despite the fact that they were ratified after the first hospitalization related to stimulant addiction had occurred. This omission suggests the association between hiropon and a healthy, productive mind, at least from a legislative perspective persisted.

These acts yielded both positive and negative results in the early postwar period. The positive side of the Japanese state's failure to acknowledge consistent hiropon users as "addicts" was that users were not subject to being classified as having an "unhealthy body" or "unhealthy mind." Towards the end of the hiropon crisis, as the Japanese government attempted to institute stricter and more severe regulation of hiropon use, these classifications would change so that

⁸² Friman, *Narcodiplomacy*, 63-64

⁸³ "The Cannabis Control Act" (japaneselawtranslation.go.jp, Tokyo, 1948)

⁸⁴ "The Medical Practitioners Act" (japaneselawtranslation.go.jp, Tokyo, 1948)

"The Act on Public Health Nurses, Midwives, and Nurses" (japaneselawtranslation.go.jp, Tokyo, 1948)

consistent users would often be subject to involuntary hospitalization at state facilities. At these facilities, hiropon users were often treated with radical and inhumane methods in an attempt to curb addiction and prevent relapse.⁸⁵ So, in a sense, delaying use of such a label was likely beneficial to consistent hiropon users. Of course, SCAP and the Japanese state's failure to recognize the addictive nature of hiropon also allowed for more unchecked growth in hiropon use across Japan.

III. Crisis Consciousness: Addressing a Crisis

It is difficult and important to define the origins of a national consciousness of public health crisis. There is no single point at which trends in narcotics consumption definitively cross over into a widely accepted "crisis zone." Similarly, there is no single boundary that, when reached, redefines a given substance's consistent user as an "unhealthy body" or "unhealthy mind." The idea of a national hiropon crisis was created collaboratively by the state, media, and the citizenry. In the case of Occupation Japan, during the time of the hiropon crisis, there existed two distinct streams of media. The American, or pro-American, media sought to justify and provide ideological support for the Occupation. In the case of the hiropon crisis where the influx of hiropon was often attributed to communists and third-party nationals while the American military's involvement with stimulant trade was completely ignored. The Japanese media meanwhile reported on the spectacle of things, reporting upon hiropon-related crimes and driving up public fear related to widespread hiropon use. Sometimes the Japanese media's priorities aligned with those of the Occupation government; however, often the two streams of media also contradicted each other.

The Stars and Stripes newspaper was an American state-funded publication reporting news related to U.S. service members who were its primary readership. Even though the

⁸⁵ Kingsberg, Moral Nation, p. 196

readership was primarily composed of these service members, Stars and Stripes reporting set an agenda which would set the stage for future Cold War messaging associating “Red China” with the international drug trade. On May 4th, 1948, the Stars and Stripes printed a story about the seizure of approximately 150 lbs of opium on a U.S. oil tanker. The article reads: “Captain W.B. Simpson discovered the opium in the quarters of two dead Chinese seamen after their bodies were found in the ship’s cofferdam section.”⁸⁶ On May 6th, 1948, only two days later, the Stars and Stripes Pacific newspaper printed a story that detailed the existence of an opium extraction plant in the former Japanese colony of Manchuria. This news was reported to the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs by Harry J. Anslinger, a delegate from the United States. The article states: “The wartime... Japan-built opium-extraction plant in Mukden, Manchuria [was] capable of producing 50 tons of heroin per year-- about 50 times the world’s legitimate requirement... The commission is considering the definition of narcotic drugs as an instrument of genocide...”⁸⁷ About a month later, on June 20th, 1948, the Stars and Stripes ran a story about piracy and smuggling routes within Asia: “Recently Ireland seized 100 pounds, of smoking opium right on the Pusan docks.’ Ireland estimated the value of the opium at \$1,000,000 in the United States. It came from China in five boxes...”⁸⁸

Other pieces published in 1948 report on opium and heroin as the major Asian narcotics issue, identifying China as its source.⁸⁹ Opium and heroin were long standing issues in Asia and China, primarily due to continued British trading of the substances in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After 50 years of unenforceable initiatives, largely created by Chinese activists and foreign missionary collaborators, China’s opium addiction problem had hardly improved since

⁸⁶ N.A., “Opium Cache Found on U.S. Oil Tanker,” *Stars and Stripes Pacific* (Tokyo, JP), May 4th, 1948

⁸⁷ N.A. “U.N. Delegate Tells of Big Heroin Plant,” *Stars and Stripes Pacific* (Tokyo, JP), May 6th, 1948

⁸⁸ Frank L. White, “Smuggling,” *Stars and Stripes Pacific* (Tokyo, JP), June 20th, 1948

⁸⁹ George Vine, “U.S. Welfare Worker Describes Child Labor in China Tin Mines,” *Stars and Stripes Pacific* (Tokyo, JP), June 20th, 1948

N.A. “Japan,” *Stars and Stripes Pacific*, (Tokyo, JP), June 20th, 1948

the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911.⁹⁰ The Stars and Stripes Pacific directly supported the recent SCAP laws related to narcotics control that prioritized the control of opium and heroin. In publishing these articles, the Stars and Stripes both pushed the narratives that opium and heroin were the most pressing threats to Japan's national health and that China was the origin of this threat.

In Japan, SCAP faced a similar, albeit lesser, political target in the Japanese Communist Party, or JCP. The articles that associated China with narcotics laid the groundwork for SCAP to begin making movements against the rising JCP from 1948 under the guise of narcotics control. In 1950, the Tokyo police arrested several JCP party members, charging them with possession of narcotics that had reportedly originated in the People's Republic of China.⁹¹ In 1952, it was reported that a JCP organizer was arrested for manufacturing and distributing through Korean brokers more than 100,000 doses of hiropon.⁹² Such reports often only appeared in pro-American media while the Japanese media tended to portray communist involvement with drug trafficking as less of a central issue.⁹³

The majority of Japanese media coverage related to the Hiropon Age focused on the involvement of Korean and Chinese nationals in hiropon-related arrests. For example, in 1953, the Asahi Shimbun reported on the arrest of two men for the manufacture and sale of hiropon.

⁹⁰ Jonah Gertz, "A Picture of Chinese Opium and Narco-Culture from the End of the 19th through the early 20th Century." (research paper, Santa Cruz, California, 2019) 10-19

In 2019 I wrote a research paper on this topic under the guidance of Professor Gail Hershatzer at the University of California Santa Cruz. This paper remains unpublished, however, the following sources acted as the cornerstones in establishing my argument related specifically to the landscape of China's drug culture in the early-to-mid twentieth-century.

Gail Hershatzer, Women and China's Revolutions, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Press, 2019)

Edward R. Slack, "The National Anti-Opium Association and the Guomindang State, 1924-1937" *Opium Regimes*, Edited by Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000)

Steffen Rimner, Opium's Long Shadow: From Asian Revolt to Global Drug Control, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2018)

Yongming Zhou, Anti-Drug Crusades In Twentieth-Century China (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999)

⁹¹ Kingsberg, Moral Nation, 186

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Ibid

The title of the story, “Korean Caught in Manufacture of Stimulants,” made little mention of the fact that, while one of the men was born Korean, both men were Japanese citizens due to their dual citizenship.⁹⁴ In this way, Japanese and American media coverage of the hiropon crisis came together as a means of strengthening anti-communist ideals while ignoring or distorting the fact that much of Japan’s hiropon was being produced domestically. Such narratives became fairly commonplace among government officials and law enforcement when addressing the issue. A member of the national police task force on hiropon was once quoted as saying that “[third-country nationals] knew all too well the dangers of stimulants” and that “seventy percent of the manufacturers of hiropon are Korean, and they do not become addicted themselves...”⁹⁵ While, of course, there was a certain amount of contribution to the hiropon market by third-country nationals, such concrete statements neglected to acknowledge the prominence of domestic Japanese producers. Furthermore, the assertion that Korean producers of hiropon were not themselves becoming addicted to their product implies that this member of the national police task force perceived the Hiropon age as a product of Korean subjugation efforts.

Towards the peak of public fear related to hiropon, the black-market supply of wartime methamphetamine began to run out. In some ways, such an occurrence opened a door of opportunity for recovery. In 1953, 87 methamphetamine labs were raided by Osaka police. Once the data about these labs were examined, it was found that about a third of Osaka methamphetamine operations were administered by two people alone and only ten percent were administered by more than three.⁹⁶ Larger, more systemic methamphetamine operations certainly existed at the time. In 1955, for example, Tokyo police busted a domestic hiropon manufacturing ring with around 70 employed participants and multiple locations for the manufacture and

⁹⁴ Ibid, 188

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid, 183

distribution of hiropon.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the Osaka busts of 1953 indicate that the Hiropon Age was not a coordinated attack on Japan by third-country nationals, as the National Police, American and Japanese media claimed, but instead was largely sustained by domestic individuals.

While Japanese and American media sources worked together to promote narratives that shifted blame for the hiropon crisis onto non-Japanese peoples, they diverged in their depictions of military bases. In the Asahi Shimbun, United States military bases, sometimes referred to as “hiropon bases,” were characterized as home to drug-dealing GIs who brought the horror of hiropon to even small, countryside towns.⁹⁸ Within the arts community too there was an association between American military bases and the spread of drugs in postwar Japan. Films such as “Akasen Kichi” (Red-Line Base) and “Kyo en,” (Feast of Maniacs) depicted American soldiers as unscrupulous drug dealers.⁹⁹

In contrast, American military officials denied any involvement with the distribution of narcotics on behalf of the United States military, arguing that the root of the problem was drug trafficking from “Red China.”¹⁰⁰ Yet claims of the U.S. military’s involvement in hiropon distribution were substantiated in the post-occupation period. After SCAP’s initial acquisition of military resources, despite a vocal commitment to the redistribution of wartime hiropon caches to specific pharmaceutical wholesalers, methamphetamine stockpiles ended up on the black market. This transition of goods was often facilitated by contracted members of organized crime syndicates as middlemen, most of which already had a large quantity of hiropon from the liquidation of military assets in the immediate postwar period.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Ibid, 184

⁹⁸ Ibid, 187

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Friman, Narcodiplomacy, 66

IV. Crisis Resolution

In 1949, even prior to much of the media frenzy surrounding hiropon, the National Diet debated the necessity of stimulant control laws. Diet members argued that addicts who had committed crimes while under the influence of amphetamines were individually responsible for their own actions, that prohibition would hurt “productive” businesses and workers, and that hiropon remained effective within the context of medicinal use.¹⁰² The issue was shelved until 1951, when, as a result of further debate on the subject, the Diet agreed to pass the “Stimulants Control Act.” While arguably more successful in curbing hiropon use than no legislation at all, this, too, proved to be fairly ineffective. At the time of the Stimulant Control Act’s ratification, outright prohibition was not a legislative option due to plans made by the National Police Reserve to utilize the drug.¹⁰³ Thus, the act did very little to curb the growing population of consistent amphetamine users. While minor penalties were imposed upon those who engaged in “import manufacture, trafficking, receipt, possession and [or] use” of methamphetamine, Japan’s national police force was still in a state of disarray due to SCAP’s immediate postwar decentralization of the Japanese government for the purposes of democratic intervention.¹⁰⁴

From 1950, Japan’s national police force grew and arrest capabilities returned due to SCAP’s military manpower being diverted by America’s entrance into the Korean War.¹⁰⁵ In 1951, approximately 17,500 people were arrested in accordance with hiropon control laws as specified in the Stimulus Control Act. The following year, about 18,500 were arrested for similar crimes. In 1953, the number of those arrested for charges related to the Stimulant Control Act

¹⁰² Erdstrom, “The Forgotten Success Story,” 525

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Friman, *Narcodiplomacy*, 67

¹⁰⁵ Kingsberg, *Moral Nation*, 198

nearly doubled to approximately 38,500 arrests. In 1954, the same year as the highly publicized “Kyoko-chan incident,” arrest numbers climbed to a new height of approximately 55,500.¹⁰⁶

Yet, increasing arrest numbers did not necessarily indicate the effectiveness of the Stimulants Control Law, however. The increase in hiropon-related arrests in 1954 may have been more attributable to an increase in the numbers and capabilities of the national police force coupled with the media frenzy surrounding hiropon, rather than being proof of an effective top-down anti-hiropon campaign. Also in 1954 the Ministry of Health and Welfare surveyed the general population of Japan in hopes of attaining a better understanding of national narcotics trends. This survey was conducted through the filling out of anonymous census cards in prefectural sample groups of Japanese citizens aged 15 through 30. Of those sampled, 7.5 percent had experience with methamphetamine. Almost 75 percent of this group were daily users.¹⁰⁷ Based on these results, the Ministry of Health and Welfare projected that, at the time of the survey, there were 2,000,000 who had experience with the substance and approximately 550,000 consistent methamphetamine users nationwide. Further, approximately 200,000 individuals had developed psychosis as a result of consistent methamphetamine usage.¹⁰⁸

Based on the survey estimates, the 54,000 arrests that occurred in 1954 would only account for about 10% of the consistent user base, and only about 2% of the population who had probably experimented with the substance. Given hiropon’s highly addictive qualities, a non-negligible portion of those who experimented with the substance might have turned into habitual users. Furthermore, not all of those arrested for hiropon-related crimes were addicts. Therefore, the latter figure of approximately 2% of the hiropon-using population is likely a more accurate indication of how mass arrests affected the overall state of the crisis. Furthermore, about

¹⁰⁶ Erdstrom, “The Forgotten Success Story: Japan and the Methamphetamine Problem” 526

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

70% of these arrests were related to possession rather than the buying and selling of the substance.¹⁰⁹ While sweeping hiropon-related arrests were not necessarily unproductive in combatting the amount of hiropon available to the underground market, clearly the state was not able to effectively curb the crisis through enforcement of narcotics-control laws alone. Hiropon use had been unregulated for so long that the crisis could no longer be contained solely through policing.

The root of the Japanese national government's inability to adequately address the Hiropon Age in legislation in the early 50s, prior to the 1954 spike in hiropon fear campaigns, is unclear. It is possible that any internal push to establish meaningful stimulant-control laws was met with resistance by those who viewed the change in tone surrounding the substance as a politically risky flip-flop after having neglected, or even partially endorsed via its distribution during the war, the postwar spike in methamphetamine usage. This attitude of neglect was supported by existing SCAP-drafted narcotics legislation, which, as mentioned previously, was much more focused on controlling American-designated "problem substances," like heroin, cocaine, marijuana and opium. After all, at the time of the Stimulants Control Act's initial ratification, SCAP was still deeply involved in the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare and continued to display negligent attitudes towards early crisis intervention.

Despite a fair amount of the state's own incompetence related to curbing the Hiropon Age, it is unfair to place the responsibility entirely on the Japanese government. As a legislative body, the National Diet was still in the process of finding its footing after political turmoil. Not only were there many new members of the Diet after early post-Occupation elections, but for the first time women were allowed to hold office. The political dynamics of a new era had yet to fully materialize. The 1954 national stimulant consumption data-collection campaign likely

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 528

could not have occurred any sooner due to a lack of the critical labor power to collect resources (and network of public health officials).

In the 1950 Act on Health and Welfare for the Mentally Disabled, otherwise known as the “mental hygiene law,” the Japanese State attempted its first major foray into approaching the hiropon crisis as an issue of public health rather than legality. In Article Five, the “mentally disabled” were defined as individuals who experienced: “schizophrenia, acute addiction to, or dependency on a psychoactive substance.”¹¹⁰ While hiropon is not explicitly mentioned here as a psychoactive substance, the inclusion of the addict in the category of “mentally disabled” around the time of the crisis’ first recognition among lawmakers is telling of the state’s greater strategy. In Article 22, the Act states that “Any individual who has known a person with mental disorders or a person suspected of having mental disorders may apply to the Prefectural Governor for an examination by a Designated Physician and protection of said person.”¹¹¹ Furthermore, Article 23 states that a police officer who has “found a person deemed likely to harm him/herself or others due to his or her mental disorders... the police officer shall immediately report the findings to the Prefectural Governor by way of the nearest public health center.”¹¹² Such legal language encouraged members of the public to inform the police of known hiropon addicts, at which point said addict was subject to forced hospitalization.

In tandem with increasing arrests related to hiropon-control violations, the Japanese government also began subsidizing asylums nationwide to increase rehabilitation resources for the public. In an attempt to use these state facilities to curb national hiropon use, the state subjected stimulant addicts to involuntary hospitalization. However, even with a consistent flow of government money to increase access to rehabilitation, hospitals nationwide could only offer a

¹¹⁰ “Act on Mental Health and Welfare for the Mentally Disabled” (japaneselawtranslation.go.jp, Tokyo, 1950)

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² Ibid

fraction of their facilities to identified addicts. Those few consistent users who were involuntarily admitted to these facilities were subject to inhumane treatment administered as an attempt at curbing addiction.¹¹³

By 1954, over 4000 hiropon addicts had been identified and reported to the necessary authorities. However, of these 4000 addicts identified, only 263 were hospitalized in state-subsidized facilities nationwide.¹¹⁴ In an attempt to deal with patient overflow, the Japanese state allotted enough funding for the construction of 3,750 facilities for the expressed purpose of rehabilitating hiropon addicts. When such expectations fell flat, those addicts who were identified, but were not able to be hospitalized, were often treated on an outpatient basis.¹¹⁵ Those few addicts who were hospitalized on an inpatient basis were monitored and secured during stages of withdrawal. In this way, hospitalization yielded some benefits for hiropon addicts, given the long-term suffering associated with addiction. However, in a collective attempt to gather as much information on stimulant addiction as possible, hiropon addicts at various medical institutions were sometimes subject to radical experimental treatments such as lobotomy and shock therapy as well as non-consensual psychotherapy.¹¹⁶

The central Japanese state, still coping with SCAP's legacy of decentralizing the national police force, was prevented from effectively enforcing narcotics control. While arrest numbers for hiropon-related offences climbed significantly in the early 1950s, such an upward trend was more indicative of the Japanese national police force's returning power at the end of the Occupation era than any meaningful quelling of the narcotics epidemic. In 1954, the peak year for hiropon-related arrests, only 28% of such arrests were for the distribution of the substance

¹¹³ Kingsberg, Moral Nation, 196-7

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Ibid

while the rest were attributed to use and possession.¹¹⁷ Such a high volume of arrests might have contributed to the decline of the hiropon crisis to a certain degree, but given the fairly decentralized nature of the postwar hiropon market and the relatively low volume of arrests related to distribution, it is likely more accurate to reflect on these arrest statistics as an indicator of growing anti-hiropon sentiments among the public.

In another attempt to initiate a fairly ambitious top-down defense against the growing crisis, the state also broadened the legal definition of an “unhealthy mind” and attempted to conscript hiropon addicts into semi-converted medical facilities while simultaneously constructing new ones specifically for the purposes of addict rehabilitation. While this was, perhaps, a more conventional approach to a public health crisis, rather than a “moral panic” as Kingsberg refers to it, such an ambitious effort was ultimately a failure once it became clear just how few hiropon addicts could be housed in existing facilities and that the construction of new rehabilitation spaces fell short of expectations.

Grassroots movements

It is difficult to definitively claim success related to the grassroots education and rehabilitation campaigns of the Hiropon Age given the highly individualized nature of drug addiction. There exist very few metrics that provide a comprehensive snapshot of national recovery other than a sharp decline in arrests after 1954.¹¹⁸ However, there exists a simultaneous unaccounted-for gap in the historical record related to Japan’s national recovery. Given that hiropon-related arrest statistics account for very little of the projected population of hiropon users at the crisis’ peak, why did hiropon-related arrests decline so quickly following 1954? It is likely that grassroots education campaigns facilitated by schoolteachers and peer-to-peer rehabilitation programs facilitated by neighborhood associations enjoyed some degree of success

¹¹⁷ Erdstrom, “The Forgotten Success Story,” 528

¹¹⁸ Kingsberg, Moral Nation, 198.

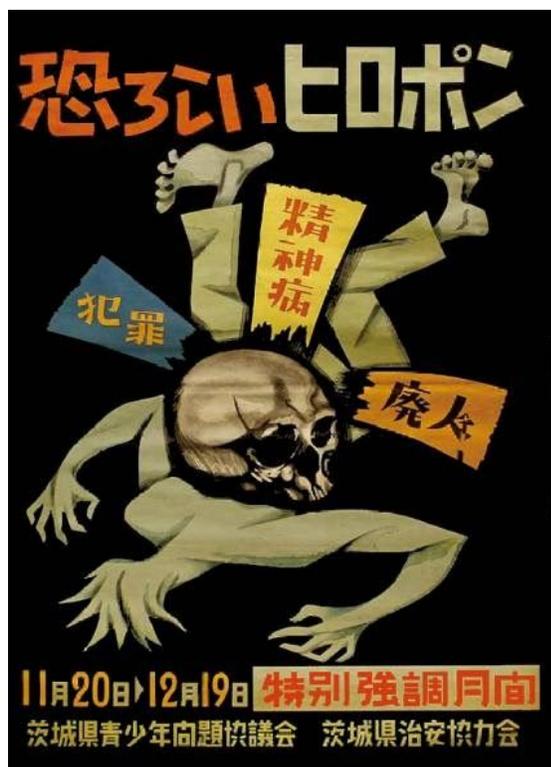


Image acquired on March 18th, 2021 from <https://images.app.goo.gl/0K6GHXpc1tH6tDQ3A>. This poster was made to promote a public forum event related to "youth problems" sponsored by the Ibaraki Prefectural Safety Association. The large title at the top translates to "terrifying hiropon." The yellow label translates to "mental sickness," the blue label translates to "crime," the orange label translates to "crippled."

in curbing the crisis even if such success is not proven by quantitative data. Such campaigns sought to change the dialogue surrounding the substance, recharacterizing it as a dangerous and addictive, while directly interfacing with vulnerable individuals through reintegration programs.¹¹⁹ There existed a complex dynamic related to the Japanese youth and hiropon that was exacerbated by Japanese media coverage of the “Kyoko-chan Incident.” In many cases, Japan’s youth were viewed as both the perpetrators and victims of

hiropon-related crime just as, in the case of Hosoda Kyoko’s rape and murder, a heinous criminal act had

been committed by one youth against another.¹²⁰ In 1955, the Japanese Ministry of Education set forth an initiative to directly address hiropon use in vulnerable youth. Educators were encouraged to present anti-drug lessons in-classroom, offer individual assistance to those students who were particularly in need of guidance, detect and report symptoms of drug use, and work with both families and neighborhood associations to discourage drug use.¹²¹ At the same time there existed a punitive attitude towards those students who experimented with or used hiropon habitually. One education journal article encouraged homeroom teachers to expel any student who showed signs of hiropon use.¹²² In this way, educators contributed to the pervasive

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 195.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 194.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 195.

¹²² Ibid.

attitudes related to Japanese youth and the hiropon crisis, treating them both as perpetrators and victims of circumstance.

In 1955, the General Headquarters for Promotion of Policy Against Stimulants was created as a communications middleman between the public and the state specifically for issues related to the hiropon crisis.¹²³ The GHPPAS established offices in 36 of Japan's 47 prefectures and began a massive anti-hiropon propaganda campaign that sustained and further stoked public outcry for harsher restrictions on the substance.¹²⁴ There also existed informal organizations which sought to provide individual counsel for hiropon addicts through groups reminiscent of the neighborhood associations, *tonarigumi*, used during wartime to distribute food.¹²⁵ Within this counselling system, local volunteers would assist addicts in societal reintegration, finding employment and maintaining their sobriety.¹²⁶

The End of the Hiropon Age

As previously stated, there is little quantitative data available related to the facilitation of nationwide grassroots education and rehabilitation campaigns. Shortly after such campaigns began, hiropon-related arrests sharply declined. Given the Japanese state's inability to provide adequate top-down public health resources for the general population, these campaigns likely filled a resource gap on the local level. These campaigns, coupled with a return to national economic solvency and centralization of the black market around organized crime syndicates after the reemployment of independent stimulant producers and distributors, made hiropon sourcing significantly easier to address.¹²⁷

¹²³ Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story: Japan and the Methamphetamine Problem." p. 527-8

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Kingsberg, Moral Nation, 198

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Ibid, 198-9

Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story," 527-8

Miriam Kingsberg summarized the end of the crisis well when she wrote “The use of the phrase *Hiropon Age* in its own time suggests society’s awareness that the drug was characteristic of a specific and passing temporal timeframe...”¹²⁸ At the dawn of an economic golden age, Japan’s national postwar cynicism had begun to fade. Rapid economic growth returned jobs to the general population of Japan which largely quelled the decade-long issue of national resource scarcity. Without food scarcity, the issue by which the Japanese black market acquired its national relevancy, underground commercial activity diminished. With the diminution of critical resource trading on black market, so too did underground narcotics commercial activity rapidly diminish.¹²⁹ As for hiropon addicts, it was likely the combination of harsh stimulant control laws, the social “othering” of addicts as deviants through popular Japanese media outlets, the various grassroots support systems that had been established and the general improvement in quality of life during Japan’s economic boom years that motivated individuals to turn away from their hiropon habit.¹³⁰

V. Conclusion

Echoes of Occupation-Era Narcotics Legislation

Occupation-era narcotics laws prioritized the control of opium, marijuana, heroin, and cocaine above all else. The prioritization of controlling these substances was not, however, based so much on an interest in the public health and welfare of Japan, but instead on existing American legislation which sought to eliminate them from the transcontinental narco economy.¹³¹ During its tenure as Japan’s governing body in the immediate postwar period, SCAP failed to provide Japan with the necessary legislation and tools to address the national stimulant epidemic. Furthermore, the narcotics legislation which SCAP implemented were unenforceable

¹²⁸ Kingsberg, *Moral Nation*, 198

¹²⁹ *Ibid*

¹³⁰ Erdstrom, “The Forgotten Success Story,” 529

¹³¹ Friman, *Narcodiplomacy*, 66

due to the decentralization and disempowering of the national police force in the immediate postwar period. It was not until the very end of the Occupation period that the Japanese national police regained their powers of arrest. SCAP also contributed to the crisis by liquidating its own confiscated hiropon stocks while redirecting blame towards foreigners and communists in an effort to increase ideological tensions in the region.¹³²

Towards the end of the Occupation era, the Japanese state began reforming ineffective narcotics control laws related to hiropon. However, given the disorganized state of the national police force and the hiropon crisis' rapid rate of growth, such initiatives were not enough. In 1954, the year of the "Kyoko-chan incident," when crisis consciousness had fully materialized within the general population of Japan, hiropon-related arrests sharply increased and the state attempted to force hiropon addicts into inpatient care. However, based on data collected by the Ministry of Health and Welfare that same year, the 54,000 arrested for hiropon-related crimes comprised only a small portion of the affected population.¹³³ Furthermore, national public-health resources were not sufficient to take on even 4000 known hiropon addicts, while those addicts who were hospitalized were often subject to inhumane treatment.¹³⁴

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how and why the hiropon crisis came to such a quick end by 1956. However, grassroots education and rehabilitation campaigns, coupled with the return to national economic solvency, were likely the greatest contributing factors to the sharp decline in hiropon-related crime in the years following 1954. Nationwide anti-hiropon classroom initiatives included in-class hiropon education and punitive action against those students suspected of using. This likely provided a change in dialogue surrounding the substance, which had

¹³² Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story," 529

¹³³ Ibid, 526

¹³⁴ Kingsberg, Moral Nation, 196-7

previously been advertised as an effective productivity enhancer.¹³⁵¹³⁶ Peer-to-peer rehabilitation programs facilitated by neighborhood organizations also offered addicts support in overcoming addiction on an individual basis.¹³⁷ While the state had attempted to provide similar resources for addicts in nationalized inpatient care, a lack of facilities prevented such care on the scale necessary to curb the crisis.¹³⁸ It appears that peer-to-peer rehabilitation programs filled the void left by the Japanese state's failure in providing individual support to all hiropon addicts. Finally, the Japanese economic boom at the end of the 1950s ushered in new employment opportunities for the general population and provided the basis for the reinvention of national identity in the form of economic nationalism.

In short, SCAP had the legislative power and resources to take preventative action for the purposes of national public health, but refused to address a burgeoning narcotics crisis in favor of implementing policy which would benefit American geopolitical initiatives. SCAP made efforts to reduce the judicial power of the Japanese state, spread ideologically-motivated misinformation during the occupation era and participated in black marketeering of methamphetamine.¹³⁹ This is why SCAP's involvement in the hiropon age's development warrants further analysis.

While some Japanese narcotics control laws have been replaced or reformed in the years since the postwar methamphetamine crisis, the legacies of both the Hiropon Age and SCAP's approach to narcotics control still loom large. The Hiropon Age was only the first methamphetamine crisis in 20th century Japan; it was followed by a second crisis in the early 1970s. In short, this crisis was significantly different because mass consumption was no longer sparked by the substances' perceived ability as a productivity enhancer, but instead as a pleasure

¹³⁵ Ibid, 198

¹³⁶ Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story," 523

¹³⁷ Ibid, 527-8.

¹³⁸ Kingsberg, Moral Nation, 196-7

¹³⁹ Friman, Narcodiplomacy, 66

drug.¹⁴⁰ Yet we can note that the recurrence of the crisis helped extend the legacy of the Hiropon Age closer to the present day. In February 2021, it was reported that Yokohama customs had confiscated approximately 237 kilograms of stimulants (equivalent to approximately 15.2 billion yen) over the course of 2020.¹⁴¹ Such confiscation statistics are not necessarily indicative of a modern-day crisis, but it is worth noting that, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the stimulant market in Japan managed to thrive.

The continued consumption of methamphetamine is not the only lasting legacy of the Hiropon Age. At present, there is still Occupation era narcotics-control legislation that sets national standards, despite never having been an effective safeguard against threats to public health and welfare. The modern state of discourse related to marijuana in Japan is particularly telling of the blind spots that Occupation era legislation continues to support.

In the November 5, 2020 episode of *The Japan Times*' "Deep Dive" podcast series titled "CBD - Japan's Path to Medical Marijuana?" the primary conversation about CBD was prefaced with an anecdote told by Dr. Yuji Masataka, a founding member of the medicinal cannabis legalization advocacy group Green Zone Japan. Dr. Masataka describes a newspaper article he had read recently in which the author describes recently confiscated fine, white powder as marijuana.¹⁴² Of course, marijuana does not exist in the form of fine, white powder. A widespread lack of drug education and resulting negative attitudes towards substances such as marijuana continue to define the conversation-space related to narcotics control in Japan.

¹⁴⁰ Erdstrom, "The Forgotten Success Story," 529-538. Substance sourcing, social dynamics and state response were also significantly different from those dynamics of the Hiropon Age. For more information on Japan's second 20th century methamphetamine crisis, and how it compared to the Hiropon Age, please refer to Erdstrom's "The Forgotten Success Story."

¹⁴¹ "横浜税関押収量初の1トン超 違法薬物、件数全国の6割, [Yokohama Customs seized more than 1 ton of illegal drugs, 6% of the nationwide total]" *産経フォト*, February 17th, 2021, <https://www.sankei.com/photo/daily/news/210217/dly2102170009-n1.html>

¹⁴² Oscar Boyd, interview with Yuji Masataka and Dan Buyonovsky, *The Japan Times: Deep Dive*, Podcast Audio, November 5th, 2020 <https://audioboom.com/posts/7722762-cbd-japan-s-path-to-medical-marijuana-w-dan-buyanovsky>

The “Cannabis Control Act,” despite having been passed by the Occupation government geared towards American interests, not only remains a standard within the modern landscape of Japanese drug-control laws, but it also inspires aggressive action against the legal sale of CBD (cannabidiol) and those who advocate for wider legalization of marijuana. CBD is an extract from marijuana which contains little-to-no THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the psychoactive property of the marijuana flower. In contrast, CBD is known to have anti-inflammatory and anti-anxiety properties among users. For those reasons, the substance is currently legal in Japan and has even been used by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for his symptoms resulting from osteo colitis.¹⁴³ According to *Japan Times* contributor, Dan Buyonovsky, the primary work of CBD-selling establishments in Japan is to educate their consumer base on these facts. One CBD-selling coffee shop in particular has even been forced to combat neighborhood flyers which claim criminal activity at their place of business.¹⁴⁴ Having had complaints lodged against him at the hospital where he works due to his work as an activist, Dr. Masataka has also been victim to some of these aggressive attitudes towards marijuana.¹⁴⁵

The continued enforcement of the “Cannabis Control Act” is likely the most controversial remaining tenet of Occupation era narcotics control laws, given that other such restrictions were more oriented towards the control of substances like opium and heroin. However, the lack of willingness on the behalf of the modern Japanese government to update its discourse related to drugs is emblematic of greater scars left by the Hiropon Age. CBD is a poignant example of such a dynamic because, even though the medicinal benefits of the substance have been proven within the medical community and even utilized by former high-ranking members of government, there remains a pervasive sense of social apprehension in using or discussing the substance due to the

¹⁴³ Ibid

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

inseparable association between Occupation-defined “drugs” and Japan’s postwar identity crisis. In this sense, the modern state of Japanese narcotics control still resides within the Occupation era.

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