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**Doctoral Thesis**

**Subcultures of war. Images of the Asia-Pacific War in  
Japanese youth and fan culture.**

戦争のサブカルチャー。若者とファンの文化における  
太平洋戦争のイメージ。

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## Abstract

Memories of the Asia-Pacific War (1937-1945) are constantly present in Japanese popular culture. Despite much research concerning representations of the war in mainstream culture, little is known about representations in amateur works. This dissertation analyzes images of war in Japanese fan productions, defined via a modified concept of the 'circuit of culture'. I focus on four forms: music, *dōjinshi* (fan comic books), fan videos and military cosplay. I identify three main concepts necessary in the analysis of war-themed fan productions: *kandō*, nostalgia, and pop nationalism. *Kandō* is a strong emotional reaction to given content. Nostalgia allows idealization of the past and its perception according to the needs of the present day. Finally, pop nationalism is a trend of 'loving Japan' expressed through small things like support for Japanese sports, national symbols and Japanese products, but without explicit reference to historical consciousness or politics of the contemporary state. These three elements are recurring aspects of the fan productions discussed.

The fan productions presented in the case studies are created by young people who have no personal memories of war, but remain strongly influenced by media and pop culture images. All the works discussed were made public, posted on the Internet, or presented during dedicated events, with the purpose of being consumed by an audience. I analyze the content of these fan productions, the types of war narratives they present, and their ideological stances. Whenever possible, I reached out to the creators. During the interviews they shared their motivations, historical interests and details of the production process, particularly about the research necessary for creating works on the theme of war.

Analysis of war-themed fan productions shows that these amateur works are clustered towards the conservative and nationalistic end of the ideological spectrum of war memories. By contrast, mainstream representations cover the whole scale from progressive, through progressive-leaning and conservative to nationalistic. Ideological positions are partially related to the form itself. Fan productions are made as a hobby, for the entertainment of both creators and audience. They are short, visually attractive and emotional, and this form is more suitable for expressing positive attachment and affection rather than distanced criticism. The creators usually conduct thorough research in the area of their interest, gaining deep but selective knowledge about

Japanese war history. Many actively choose to avoid discussions concerning Japanese war responsibility, although they are aware of the issue. Motivations for creating fan productions vary from mainly self-expression to influencing audience and 'teaching' people about the war past. The latter attitude is characteristic mainly of people with nationalistic views advocating a positive interpretation of Japan's role in the Asia-Pacific War.

While in some cases attachment to conservative/nationalistic narratives overlaps with support for conservative politics, data gathered during the interviews suggests the existence of 'nostalgic pop nationalism'. Some of the creators take deep pride in the wartime past, use it as part of their identity construct, and perceive the war generation as role models. Simultaneously they distance themselves from the modern-day Japanese state. The analysis suggests that many young Japanese actively seek positive images of heroic past without supporting conservative politics. The study, therefore, deepens our knowledge about the place of (medialized) war history among the entertainment practices of young Japanese, and provides insights into nationalism shaped and spread from the bottom up.

## Japanese Abstract

### 学位論文内容の要旨

本論は日本の若者の娯楽の間に（メディア化された）戦争歴史の場を指摘し、社会で下から形作られ、普及されたナショナリズムについての知識を深める。

日本のサブカルチャーには太平洋戦争(1937-1945)の影響を受けた数々の作品が絶え間なく存在している。

戦争のイメージに関わる多くの作品の研究が盛んであるのに対しサブカルチャーに分類されるアマチュア作品の内容はそれほど知られていない。本論は独自の文化循環で定義した日本のファンプロダクションにおける戦争のイメージを解析する。まず、音楽、同人誌、MAD（ファンビデオ）と軍装コスプレの4つのタイプを焦点とし考察した。その中で戦争をテーマにするファンプロダクションの解析のために必要な概念を感動、ノスタルジア、ポップナショナリズムの3つに分類した。感動というのは、作品に接して強い印象を受け、心を奪われること。ノスタルジアは歴史を理想的に考えさせ、現在の事情に合わせて過去の出来事を理解させる。最後にポップナショナリズムというのはスポーツチーム、国の象徴や国産製品の応援など、歴史認識や現代国家への愛国心とは違った、小さいことで日本に対しての愛情を表す動向。この3つの要素がファンプロダクションについての論の基本になる。

本研究では実際の戦争体験をもとにしたものではなく、サブカルチャーとメディアから影響を受けた若者によって作られたファンプロダクションを事例として紹介した。全ての作品は視聴者に消費という目的で作られ、インターネットやファンイベントで公表されたものである。本論ではファンプロダクションの内容、提示した戦争物語のタイプとイデオロギーの立場について解析した。また、できる限り作者に連絡を取り、インタビューを通して作者の歴史的な興味、創作の動機づけとその背景を含め戦争時代に関わる研究について話した。

戦争をテーマにするファンプロダクションの解析により、これらのアマチュア作品が政治的スペクトルの右端に近い、保守的、国家主義的な思想に近いことが分かる。これに対し主流文化を考察すると進歩主義から進歩的傾向、保守主義と国家主

義まで、幅広いイデオロギーの分布が見られる。本論ではサブカルチャーの作品のイデオロギーの一極化の原因はその形式と関係があると考え。ファンプロダクションは趣味として作られ、作品の享受者、創作者とものが楽しめるものである。これらの作品にみられる視覚的かつ感情的な短い形式は批判的表現より愛情や憧れのほうが表現しやすいものである。本論の研究で明らかになったのは、これらの作品の創作者は興味がある範囲の徹底的な研究を行い、日本の戦争の歴史の狭い範囲において深い知識を得る。多くの創作者は日本の戦争責任についての知識を持っているにも関わらず、この点に関わる論議は避けている。

また、彼らの創作の動機づけは自己表現の場合もあれば戦争の歴史を教え、伝えるというものまで作者によって異なる。後者に関しては主に太平洋戦争に日本が積極的な役割を果たしたこと唱え、国家主義的な考え方を持っている場合が多い。

一般に保守的、国家主義的な物語に愛着がある人々は同時に保守的な政治を応援する傾向があるという。本論の研究では、インタビューで集まったデータより対象としたサブカルチャーに影響を受けた日本の若者は戦争の英雄の過去の積極的なイメージを求めても保守的な政治を応援しない傾向があることが明らかになった。日本人として戦争歴史にプライドを持ち、その歴史を国民意識の要素として使い、戦争世代をロールモデルとして見上げる創作者もいる中で、現代の日本国家とその政治とは距離をおく。本論ではこの概念を「ノスタルジアのポップナショナリズム」と名付け論考する。

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## Introduction

[M]emory, even and especially in its belatedness, is itself based on representation. The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. Rather than lamenting or ignoring it, this split should be understood as a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity (Huysen 1995, pp. 2-3).

More than seventy years after World War II ended in 1945, it seems not only to be constantly present in the collective consciousness of modern society, but even to have grown in importance as an element of history, politics, international affairs, and entertainment. The last aspect, entertainment, is particularly visible among younger generations, who know about the conflict from their grandparents' stories, but mostly from popular culture, including TV series, movies and video games.

The war first became visible for me as I was growing up in Poland. War memories were always an important part of the educational system and there were yearly commemorations by politicians. But, in the 2000s my interest was caught by two big, interactive war-themed museums (Warsaw Uprising Museum and Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory), several popular productions on both big and small screen, video games, and war-themed novels. Most of these were targeting teenagers and young adults. For example, the Warsaw Uprising Museum became a must-visit destination for school trips, and teenage girls breathlessly followed the adventures of handsome freedom fighters in the TV show *Time on Honor*. However, what was really gaining in popularity was a sterile version of history, featuring heroic, handsome boys and beautiful girls fighting a righteous, morally black-and-white war. Many of these stories, although beautiful and uplifting, lacked historical complexity. Simultaneously, symbols of the Warsaw Uprising got taken over by the growing number of conservative young people. Young Polish conservatives took deep pride in the idealized past of the country and its war heroes, and expressed deep interest in carefully chosen aspects of war history. Simultaneously, they were ignoring the complexity of some war-related issues, particularly the difficult history of Polish-Jewish relations.

It was not until I came to Japan for the first time in 2010 that I understood how a growing fascination in popularized versions of war history was not only a Polish phenomenon. Just like the heroic figures of the Warsaw Uprising fighters, kamikaze stories in manga, movies and books seemed to never lose their charm. While Nazi occupation stories inspired the Polish video games *Enemy front* and *This war of mine*, wartime military equipment and scenarios were used as the basis for popular Japanese web comics and online games. While young bloggers in Poland organized Uprising-inspired fashion contests, and reenacting events grew in popularity, Japanese cosplayers willingly referred to war aesthetics, choosing to dress in both Imperial Army/Navy and Nazi Germany uniforms. Many war-related pop, rock and hip-hop songs were warmly welcomed by Polish youth. Meanwhile, Japanese Vocaloid software users created covers of wartime songs and composed original ones, telling the stories about war. Polish and Japanese youth seemed to be looking for the same heroic narratives in their respective nations' war histories, even though Japanese wartime imperialism and Japan's acknowledged role as victimizer caused similar practices to be much more controversial via association with the glorification of wartime militarism. Despite being so strongly connected to human suffering and contested because of unresolved political issues and controversies surrounding Japanese war responsibility, the Asia-Pacific War (1937-1945) became a part of young people's hobbies. It was written into their entertainment activities in a 'light' form, sanitized, and reduced to emotional narratives evoking pride in the heroic acts of the wartime generation.

What drives young people towards war history in this way? In what way and which elements of the war do they incorporate into their activities, and to what outcome? Where is the line between fascination with heroic, conservative representations of the nation's past and actual engagement with conservative politics or historical revisionism? The desire to answer these questions was the starting point of this research project and PhD thesis.

More than seventy years after the war's end, it is clear that remembering and representing the conflict has much bigger meaning than simply remembering and interpreting the past. It is about the present – what individuals as well as the nation as a collective needs now – and about the roots and self-perception necessary to move towards the future. Svetlana Boym stated in her study of nostalgia that 'fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future'

(2001, p. 17). The past we want to believe in is precisely the past we need at the moment. The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed a so-called 'memory boom' around the world. For many reasons that will be discussed in the next chapter, remembering the past, with the great focus on remembering the last world war, seems precisely what society needs today. Popular reimagination of the wartime past is presented as a point of reference for many young people, who seek to reconfirm their identity and value through belonging to a community connected by a heroic past. Popular culture, including cinema, TV shows, comic books and video games and, in the case of Japan, manga and anime, has provided numerous selective, idealized and strongly emotional narratives focused on love and sacrifice to which consumers could positively relate. In the era of 'convergence culture', as Jenkins (2006) called it, these pride-evoking narratives are not only passively consumed. Closer observation of fan activities shows that many predominately young people use and retell war stories as part of their hobby. War-themed fan videos borrowing from blockbuster movies, songs composed using voice synthesizing software, cosplayers wearing wartime uniforms, fan comics presenting deep friendship between Imperial Japanese Navy officers, garage bands singing songs about the kamikaze - all of these can be found in the creative activities of Japanese youth in a visible demonstration of how war history has entered the entertainment practices of young fan producers.

This research is about the phenomenon of Japanese war-themed fan productions. As an interdisciplinary study, it combines media studies, cultural studies, memory studies, Japanese studies, fan studies and war history studies. It relates particularly to Japanese war memories represented through the idealizing lens of nostalgia. I present how some young people, who are inspired by popular culture, family stories, school education, friends circles, memory sites, documentaries and other fan productions, use their free time to talk publicly about the war. In a non-commercial form they retell preexisting war stories, or add strong emphasis to some elements of their narratives. In other cases new stories are created from scratch after being simply imagined by the creators, but often they are based on popular narrative clichés or refer to a trending form or trope. Sometimes, there is no story at all, only an aesthetically pleasing form that someone finds attractive and is disconnected from bigger context. I will present the role of medialized war memories in Japanese youth and fan subculture by tracking the forms of war-themed bottom-up productions and the narratives they present. I also give

voice to the creators I was able to contact. While many fan producers ignored my questions about their war-related activities or kindly refused further discussion, those who agreed to share their time with me provided valuable insights into their hobbies by explaining their inspirations, motivations and the techniques used in their productions. The works discussed constitute powerful evidence of young people's emotional (and to a lesser extent ideological) engagement in the discourses concerning the Japanese wartime past. Even though they are often nostalgic, idealized and fragmentary, and created primarily for entertainment, war-themed fan productions can be seen as a voice of young people stating how they want to perceive the past and how they use it in the process of their identity creation. This thesis, therefore, reveals what makes the past, with a focus on World War II history, so crucial for people living at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Chapter 1.**

### **Japanese war memories – approaches and issues**

This chapter and the next chapter introduce the literature that provided the framework for the study. It encompasses the fields of memory studies, war history and fan studies. In Chapter 1, I discuss the importance of history in the modern world and outline the reasons for our preoccupation with the past, particularly among young people seemingly not influenced by World War II events. I introduce the concept of nostalgia and its close relationship with conservative and nationalistic views on the wartime past, as well as the variety of academic approaches towards Japanese war history. As this thesis focuses on fan productions, in Chapter 2 I present the main voices in the discussion concerning general fan and otaku culture, followed by the framework I use to differentiate between mainstream and fan productions. Analysis of these original creations produced by people I call ‘fans of war’ provides material for the analysis of young people’s historical knowledge, national sentiment, and political engagement, and the influence of popular culture on their perceptions of history.

#### **Living in the memory boom**

In his broad study of the ways in which World War I is remembered nowadays, Jay Winter (2006, p. 8) described the memory boom as ‘a broad and eclectic set of signifying practices, ways of understanding the violent world in which we live and the past out of which it has emerged.’ There are numerous perspectives from which to interpret the generally intensified interest in historical issues that emerged around the globe between the 1970s and 1980s and has lasted until today, getting rather stronger than fading:

For some the memory boom is nostalgic, a yearning for a vanished or rapidly vanishing world. For others it is a language of protest, seeking out solidarities based on common narratives and traditions to resist the pressures and seductions of globalization. For others still it is a means of moving away from

politics, and of re-sacralizing the world, or of preserving the voice of victims of the multiple catastrophes of the last century. And for some, it is a way of confronting the Holocaust at the very moment which the survivors are steadily passing away. (...) Above all, it is the overdetermined character of the memory boom which is its most striking characteristic (Winter 2006, p. 19).

‘The era of memory, the era of returns’ as Eva Hoffman (2004, p. 203) called it has many faces, and its roots are placed in different spheres: technological, political and social. The 1970s brought widespread technological development. The popularization of radio and television resulted in broad access to information, which is seen as one of the factors supporting the memory boom. Winter (2006, p. 28) noticed the relevance of media in embedding and promoting testimonies. Interviews with survivors and veterans of World War II and their confessions concerning their struggles were filmed and recorded to be preserved and broadcasted. The faces and voices of people who experienced war reached a worldwide audience for the first time. As war survivors got a proper chance to publicly speak in the 1970s, the pressure to listen to them and ask them questions kept growing.

The technical possibility of spreading the word about the war would not be sufficient if it had not been accompanied by eyewitnesses’ desire to share. The war generation, as they got older and slowly passed away, realized it was ‘now or never’. If they wanted their descendants or the broader public to learn about the experiences that changed their lives forever, they could not wait any longer. And they found enthusiastic listeners. As Winter (2006, p. 43) stated, the post-war generations accepted that their closest relatives were sharing ‘traumatic memory’, both of civilian war experiences and combat. Well-educated young people living in prosperous countries, supported by the development of psychology and the knowledge of transgenerational trauma, were ready to explore their pasts and root themselves in it. Given the scale of the conflict, almost all families in countries involved were affected in some way. This led to the development of what Marianne Hirsch (1996, p. 662) called ‘postmemory’, which is inherited by descendants of those who experienced traumatic events. Postmemory is a ‘powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation’. Attempts to

understand traumatic experiences of one's parents and grandparents are yet another element motivating interest in history.

While broad interest in the past was a global phenomenon, the situation varied according to place, and some factors remain characteristic for a particular region. European war memories are centered around the Holocaust. Inseparable from World War II, the Holocaust became an internationalized, global trauma present in the consciousness of all nations. As the core of European war memories, the Holocaust is also an important part of North American memories. It is commemorated in more than fifty Holocaust museums and memorials, with the biggest being the Holocaust Memorial Museum, located by the National Mall in Washington. The ways of remembering and representing the Holocaust have been explored by many prolific scholars, for example James E. Young, Geoffrey H. Hartman, and Daniel Levy. The voices of Holocaust survivors, but also awareness of the great number of casualties resulting from the broader conflict, shifted the focus towards victim narratives and combined remembering the war with mourning of the dead. Starting with Europe, the central meaning of public, politically sanctioned war commemorations became the mourning of the dead. Over the years the anniversaries of the Liberation of Auschwitz, Warsaw Uprising, D-Day, the Hiroshima bombing and other events became central to public war memory in the countries concerned, but also well known all over the world. The media reported prominently the commemorations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Pacific War in 1991, and the Enola Gay exhibition controversy<sup>i</sup> the same year directed public interest even more towards war memories. This trend grew after 9/11, which George W. Bush compared to Pearl Harbor (cf. Dower 2010).

Around the same time, East Asian countries had their own reasons to take a deeper interest in the past as a result of political changes occurring in the 1980s and 1990s. Circumstances in the years immediately after the war's end sidelined discussion of many war responsibility issues in Asia. During the American occupation of Japan, there was great focus on rebuilding the country's economy under new conditions. There were internal conflicts in Korea and China, and amidst the deepening Cold War and resulting anticommunist struggle in Japan, the main focus of international or domestic relations was far from Asia-Pacific War discourses. Daniel Schumacher (2015, pp. 562-566), in his survey of the outpouring of war memories in Asia during the 1980s and 1990s, names several factors playing a major role in war memories coming to the

foreground of political and social interest in Asia. The end of the Cold War released international attention from the anticommunist struggle and changed the worldwide balance of power. At the same time authoritarian regimes fell or were replaced by more democratic governments, as in the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan. Political liberalization encouraged economic integration, and with the whole region undergoing rapid economic development, intraregional travel for business and leisure increased. This including travel to war-related sites for both commemoration and leisure, and the creation of tourist attractions required a reevaluation of how to represent war history to both local and foreign tourists. These processes confirmed the relevance of the war for regional identity and required the formulation of a clear statement about the past. In South Korea, meanwhile, the democratization of the country combined with the ageing of the war generation resulted in the surfacing of the so-called 'comfort women issue' in 1991, when former sexual slaves of the Japanese Army called for justice, attracting major public attention towards the issues of the wartime past (Asia-Pacific Journal Feature 2015). Finally, on a global scale the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war's end was an occasion for major commemorations and political statements concerning the past, and a reevaluation of how the war influenced the present (Schumacher 2015, p. 562).

In Japan the war was constantly present in postwar discourse, although the focus of the discussion evolved over the years (cf. Igarashi 2000, Orr 2001, Seraphim 2006, Saito 2016, Lucken 2017). During the occupation (1945-1952) Japanese war memories were shaped by SCAP (Supreme Command for the Allied Powers). Many Japanese learned for the first time about Imperial Army atrocities as the result of International Military Tribunal for the Far East. As the result of the deepening Cold War, however, Japan became a US ally in Asia, and consequently the debate concerning Japanese war responsibility as a victimizer was set aside (cf. Dower 1999). The early postwar period until the 1960s was also when Japanese pacifism emerged and Japanese grassroots movements shaped anti-war and anti-nuclear agendas (Yamamoto 2004). The 1960s witnessed publication of the first major nationalistic defense of Japan's wars, authored by Hayashi Fusao. His work justifying Japan's role in the war became an important element of a growing revisionist narrative (cf. Seaton 2007, p. 40). Simultaneously, at the end of the 1960s the *minshūshi* (people's history) movement emerged in Hokkaido. Other like-minded groups collected stories and data commemorating oppressed people (like ethnic minorities), usually omitted in the mainstream narratives (Oda 2015).

During the 1970s the air raids recording movement worked to record the testimonies of civilians who had experienced aerial bombardment at the end of the war.

From the 1970s testimonies concerning Asian victims of Japanese imperialism started appearing on the market, like Honda Katsuichi's *Chūgoku no tabi* (Journey to China) describing Nanjing Massacre. Publications concerning the military comfort women, such as those by Senda Kakō, also appeared. Two confessional books by Yoshida Seiji were discredited as fabrications in 1992, but nevertheless were powerful resources for activists arguing that comfort women were forcibly recruited by the Japanese state (Soh 2008, p. 152). Probably the most notable publication referring to Japanese war atrocities was Morimura Seiichi's *Akuma no hōshoku* (The devil's gluttony), a fiction-based-on-fact story published in 1981. The book discussed the atrocities committed by Unit 731, which conducted human experiments during biological and chemical warfare research. It became a bestseller, with more than 5.5 million copies being sold (Morimura 2002). The discussion the book evoked was furthermore followed by the death of Emperor Hirohito in 1989, which precipitated reflection over the era of his rule encouraging a national look at the wartime past.

International military conflicts also influenced Japanese war-related debates. A new chapter of the discussion concerning pacifism and national security issues was opened in 1991 following international criticism of Japanese policy in the Gulf War. It caused Japan to introduce a peacekeeping law, 'the PKO law', that was modified after September 11th terrorist attacks (Ishizuka 2005). It set Japan on the path to at least partial remilitarization, with forces deployed abroad and a debate about using the military more actively. A greater military role for Japan reawakens the ghost of Japanese militarism, triggering negative reactions in other Asian countries and fierce debate within Japan that refers strongly to the wartime past.

Alongside these political developments, since the 1950s the war was represented in Japanese popular culture. However, general interest in the past as a cultural commodity is not synonymous with an interest in precise historical knowledge. The popular narratives of World War II, from museums to films and novels, are a snapshot of the politics, technology and social changes reshaping cultural representations in any given period. Representations of war have evolved, with certain narratives gaining prominence over others at particular times. Eric Langenbacher and Friederike Eigler (2005, p. 4), in their study of the memory boom in present day Germany, noted that

‘[i]ncreasing distance and mediation are setting in as the “witness generation” passes away. (...) [T]his changing environment results in generational shifts, necessary changes in representational forms from collective and personal to cultural memory and increasing medialization of memory’. With decreasing numbers of witnesses, fewer personal war stories are shared within families. Consequently, popular images concerning war are increasingly based on media representation and public commemoration.

Langenbacher discussed different types of interrelated historical phenomena, placing them on a scale between objectivity and interpretation. Beginning with the past, and passing through history, historical consciousness, memory and ending with myth, Langenbacher (2010, p. 28) emphasized that ‘[h]istory, with its “thin” layer of interpretation, needs to be differentiated from memory and its “thick,” emotionalized, heavily mediated interpretation, and from myth, which has an extreme level of interpretation that sometimes borders on the fictional’. A similar connection was suggested by Pam Cook (2005, p. 3), who stated that,

the distinction between nostalgia, memory and history has become blurred. (...) [I]n order to sanction the legitimacy of history as a means of explaining the world, it is equally possible to see them as a continuum, with history at one end, nostalgia at the other and memory as a bridge or transition between them.

This distinction is to some point chronological. Aleida Assmann argued that the memory of historical events begins as an individual memory, to be shared in the family, and later in the collective to become part of cultural memory, and in some cases an icon/myth used for state- and nation-building. As this dynamic progresses over time, levels of generality and acceptance towards the past grows (Assmann 1999, pp. 35-52). Certain historical events can become the focus of the memory, while others can be conveniently forgotten. Medialization of memory and shifts towards cultural memory support the process, emphasizing narratives that are demanded by consumers, who, though interested in the past, are often interested in only certain aspects of it and neglect other parts. This demand for certain narratives can be seen as emerging from contemporary social and political needs, among which the image of a ‘righteous war’ seems to be the one in great demand. The perception of the past as a source of personal

pride became a global trend. This phenomenon is deeply connected with nostalgia for (imagined) national past.

### **Memory in times of identity crisis - from nostalgia to nationalism**

Given the numerous historical novels, period dramas and blockbuster movies set in the past, medialized history seems to be a preoccupation of the modern world. From the worldwide phenomenon of the British television series *Downton Abbey* (2010-2015), through to the highly successful PC video game series *Medal of honor* and *Outlander* franchise, historical representations in popular culture can have many faces. Some of them use mainly historical settings, while others are centered around specific events or include historical characters. But, what most successful titles have in common is representation of the past as an idealized, attractive space/time where the audience would like to be.

These popular, mainstream visions of the past are infused with a clear feeling of nostalgia. 'Nostalgia comes from the Greek word *nostos*, meaning "return home," and *algia*, meaning pain or longing. Hence, nostalgia literally means "homesickness" (Wilson 2005, p. 21). The word is used to describe emotional, sentimental longing for a permanently lost time and place, associated with happiness. The prominent position of nostalgic reimaginings of the past in cultural practices has been broadly recognized and analyzed by numerous scholars over the past two decades who have analyzed the social, cultural and political roles of nostalgia (cf. Boym 2001, Nadkarni and Shevchenko 2004, Cook 2005, Lindstrom 2006, Enns 2007, Wilson 2005, Kalinina 2014). Nostalgia is not about the actual past to which an individual wishes to be restored, but about an idealized image, placed safely in unreachable time and space. As Nadkarni and Shevchenko (2004, p. 491) put it,

Nostalgia (...) views individuals and societies as caught up in a destructive and irreversible flow of time. It emphasizes the irretrievability of the past as the very condition of desire. For longing in nostalgia (...) is never longing for a specific past as much as it is longing for longing itself, made all the safer by the fact that the object of that desire is deemed irrevocably lost.

It becomes particularly visible when the object of nostalgic longing is a difficult time for most members of the group, like times of dictatorship or war. Svetlana Boym (2001, pp. 57-71) categorized it as 'deideologized' in her influential study focused on post-Soviet nostalgia. Ahistorical images of 'the good old days' omit difficult and morally ambivalent memories and result from people 'longing for the time of their childhood and youth, projecting personal affective memories onto the larger historical picture and partaking collectively in a selective forgetting' (Boym 2001, p. 58). Moreover, and this point is particularly relevant for this study of Japanese fan productions, one does not need to personally experience a specific time to feel nostalgic about it. Wilson (2005, pp. 88-104) called it 'displaced nostalgia'. Based on family stories and pop cultural representations of the time before they were born, young people create a selective, idealized image of a period that they perceived as 'perfect', 'simple' and 'innocent'. As '[o]ne use of nostalgia in this case is the attempt to forge an identity where one apparently is lacking' (Wilson 2005, p. 104), these people fill their needs with the reimagined past.

Fascination with the past is born out of the needs of the present. What aspects of the past are represented (and in what way) must be seen as an interpretative measure for the present. They are an indicator of what individuals expect from the modern world, but do not find there. A similar observation was made by Winter (2006, pp. 3-4) and Welzer (2010, p. 6), who both agree that the way societies remember the past results from present needs, causing the narratives to change constantly:

Acquisitions and applications of pasts always follow the needs and demands of the present, and in this way individuals as well as memory communities always choose those aspects from the endless inventory of existing historical narratives and images that make the most sense for them in the real time of narrating and listening (Welzer 2010, p. 6).

The present situation can determine which historical events take the spotlight in national discussion, as well as evoke nostalgia towards a specific time. Nostalgia can interfere with memory by visibly aestheticizing and purifying certain narratives. "To forget and — I will venture to say — to get one's history wrong, are essential factors in

the making of a nation; and thus the advance of historical studies is often a danger to nationality' said Ernest Renan in his lecture *What is a nation?* (1995 [1882], p. 145). One can argue that remembering and commemorating certain historical events is equally (or even more) important for creating collective national identity. Still, avoiding elements that do not fit into the desired vision of the past (in which a great role is played by nostalgia) cannot be undervalued. Nostalgia, therefore, allows idealization of certain aspects of national history and simultaneously convenient forgetting of others. Beautified, uncritical images of the past can become fertile soil for nationalistic attachment.

Anthony Smith analyzed the phenomenon of national nostalgia and asked questions about the source of the modern, common desire of belonging to a community. While stating that many point to alienation caused by industrial capitalism and bureaucracies as the main causes of this phenomenon, Smith paraphrased the words of Régis Debray (2011, p. 232):

The nation with its stress on a beginning and flow in time, and a delimitation in space, raises barriers to the flood of meaninglessness and absurdity that might otherwise engulf human beings. It tells them that they belong to ancient associations of 'their kind' with definite boundaries in time and space, and this gives their otherwise ambiguous and precarious lives a degree of certainty and purpose.

Smith's observations lead to a conclusion that individuals' needs to root themselves in the collective past are a remedy against meaninglessness. In modern times, when values and ideals are being undermined and religious beliefs are being discredited, the individual feels a sort of 'homelessness' in the overflow of global information, and with the growing possibilities of changing one's place of residence, work and environment. In this chaos, national identity and traditional values become an anchor giving an individual a feeling of belonging, or a feeling of meaning based in contributing to one's 'own' community with the prospect of being remembered – just as the current community remembers and commemorates people who devoted themselves to it in the past. Pride in past generations and the feeling of carrying forward the heritage of their accomplishments can give members of a community self-confidence. Also, the creation

of a collective contributes to the growth of more devoted citizens. Consequently, in all countries an important task of the school education system is teaching history in a way that, next to presenting facts about the past, reinforces national pride and creates a spirit of national unity (cf. Foster and Crawford 2006, Cole 2007). Selective, idealized reimaginings of history are therefore necessary in two ways – first on the individual level to feel connected to something bigger, long lasting and meaningful, and secondly on the state level to create the national identity of loyal citizens.

Anthony Smith (2007, p. 27) stated that the modern world provides new factors strengthening national bonds and forcing the nation to reconsider its identity, like economic interdependence, mass communications and migration. While the beginning of the post-Cold War era was characterized by enthusiasm towards globalization, recent years have witnessed great disappointment in the idea. The reality of various economic crises, cultural integration problems resulting from migration, and growing competition in job markets have all clashed with the dream of a borderless world. According to several studies, globalization itself provokes a reaction in the form of the strengthening of national attachment. Natalie Sabanadze (2010) presents modern day nationalism as a form of resistance towards globalization: ‘it is the homogenizing, integrative and Westernizing tendencies of globalization that appear most threatening to national identities and cultures, and provoke nationalistic reassertion’ (Sabanadze 2010, sec. 31). Modern nationalism therefore aims at protecting national culture against global unification by emphasizing ethnic and national uniqueness. Certain groups feel the urge to reconfirm and reestablish the features that define them in contrast to the overwhelming multiculturalism and multinationalism of the modern world. Moreover, characterization *as a group* seems crucial for the process. Although migration and multiculturalism as reasons for turning towards nationalism are especially visible in Europe, the fear of economic instability, especially among young people just entering the market, seems to be pertinent in the case of Japan, too.

Particularly regarding post-1995 Japan, there has been considerable discussion of nationalism (cf. Iida 2004, Kingston 2004, pp. 225-256, McVeigh 2004, Saaler 2005, 2016, Takenaka 2016). Many cabinet ministers in successive conservative Liberal Democratic Party governments have been affiliated with right-wing groups aiming at eliminating ‘masochistic history’ from school textbooks, promoting Shintō values or favoring official visits at Yasukuni Shrine (Penney 2013). In the 2010s, the strength of

conservatives in government might possibly enable the most vital change of the postwar era, namely revision of Japanese pacifistic constitution (Muto 2016). The conservative environment created by influential politicians creates fertile ground for the development of 'bottom-up' nationalistic ideology among the citizens.

Nationalism is 'not only production and one-sided transmission of ideology from above, but also an on-going consumption (and therefore reproduction) which various sections of the population participate in' (Yoshino 1999, pp. 1-2). The nation is reproduced and consumed in more ways than just top-down official national policy. Probably the best-known study of 'banal nationalism' is the work of Michael Billig (1995). He presents how national identities are 'embedded in routines of social life' (1995, p. 175) through 'mindless' unnoticed habits of everyday life. Many young Japanese today focus on their national identity as Japanese through their everyday choices and behaviors rather than through political activity or more a more engaged ideology. Kayama (2002) called it '*puchi nashonarizumu*', petit nationalism. Closely related phenomenon of 'pop nationalism' was also discussed by Sakamoto (2008), Iida (2004), and Kitada (2005), contributing to a general discussion concerning nationalism among Japanese youth (cf. Sasada 2006, Kayama 2015, Fukuoka 2017). Pop nationalism is understood as expressing admiration towards one's country without a deeper consideration of the reasons. Young people enthusiastically express their love towards Japan by cheering for the Japanese national football team, choosing Japanese products, and improving their Japanese language skills. Based in pop culture and media, manga and sports events, petit nationalism is rooted in empty forms and symbols and in the need of experiencing community and emotional connection to others (Kitada 2005). Iida (2004, p. 179) called it 'nationalism as fetish', based on the consumption of image-oriented, dehistoricized and abstract national icons. This naïve, 'carefree' (*kuttaku ga nai*) nationalism resulting simply from 'liking Japan' was discussed and defined as disconnected from political statements. It seeks rather an 'innocent' pride in Japan, based on emotional attachment but lacking historical consciousness.

When Sakamoto (2008) analyzed the popularity of Kobayashi Yoshinori's revisionist manga *Sensōron* (On war) and the appeal of nationalistic narrative in manga form to young consumers, she drew the line between Kobayashi's manga and pop nationalism:

“Pop” nationalism is about ordinary people’s modes of relating to the nation-state and it is often mediated by the dynamics of mass/popular culture. It relies heavily on images and icons that are cut-off from their historical meanings. (...) If the icons and symbols of pop nationalism - immediately appealing, fashionable and pleasurable - are dissociated from history and politics and do not call for intelligent, ethical, and critical judgment, Kobayashi’s text combines the immediate appeal of the visual images with complex textual messages, openly combining the pop and the political (Sakamoto 2008).

The ‘dehistorization’ of pop nationalism and consumption of ‘empty’ forms without deeper meaning attached are, therefore, its core features. I argue, however, based on the cultural production of young Japanese, that there is a form of pop nationalism that I call ‘nostalgic pop nationalism’. It shares certain characteristics of ‘pop nationalism’, like a focus on national symbols, pride in being Japanese and an apolitical nature. However, while ‘pop nationalism’ is ahistorical and focused on the present time (sports events, national products and culture), ‘nostalgic pop nationalism’ finds the roots of personal pride in the connection to the national past. The group I am discussing expresses fascination with the Asia-Pacific War. They see the war generation as role models and are attracted to images of heroic sacrifice driven by love for family and homeland. There are also young Japanese who passionately study other historical periods. The Sengoku (the end of 15th to late 16th century) and Bakumatsu (1853-1869) periods, and historical figures like Oda Nobunaga and Sakamoto Ryōma, have gained great popularity among history fans. Young people can conduct enthusiastic historical research in their free time and gain deep but fragmentary knowledge limited to the area of their interest while ignoring the broader context. This is consistent with the practice of looking nostalgically on the past, as discussed earlier. Young history enthusiasts are represented for example by so-called *rekijo*, history fan girls, a phenomenon that became recognized by Japanese media since 2000s (Sugawa-Shimada 2015, p. 54). This study focuses on ‘nostalgic pop nationalists’ among ‘fans of war’, but fans of other historical periods can be seen as representatives of the same trend of people invested in the past in an ‘innocent’, apolitical way.

Many ‘nostalgic pop nationalists’ can be found among people interested in the history of the Asia-Pacific War. It should be noted, however, that not all young people

remain apolitical while taking pride in nostalgic reimaginings of a heroic past. A strong voice explaining the appeal of nationalism in the modern era belongs to Amamiya Karin, an ex-member of the right wing organization *Totsugekitai*, who also used to be the lead singer of ultranationalist punk band The Revolutionary Truth (*Ishinsekiseijuku*). Her example sheds light on some of the reasons why many young people reach towards the past in the process of their identity building.

Amamiya is a writer and public speaker who is deeply involved in the issues of the 'lost generation', or Japanese precariat. These are people without stable employment and the 'working poor', namely people who can be full-time employees but because of low wages remain poor (Obinger 2009). Young people who entered the work market during the 'lost decades' (1990s-2000s) have found themselves in a precarious situation. Starting their professional careers during the recession, they soon found out that their chances for stable employment with a sufficient salary, social benefits and pension perspective were limited. Consequently, many of them needed to settle for temporary and part-time jobs and became 'freeters'. A similar group is NEETs, those who are 'Not in Education, Employment nor Training'. These are single people aged 15-34 who for various reasons do not work at all and are dependent financially on their family. Both groups faced criticism from public figures and media as 'troubled young people who have no will to work' (Inui 2005). These young people have limited chances of starting a family in comparison with regular employees (cf. Cook 2013) and this becomes another perceived negative aspect of their situation.

Amamiya, who was a 'freeter' herself, draws a depressing picture of working conditions among her generation, with many poorly paid 'freeters' committing suicide and regular employees on the verge of dying from constant overwork (Amamiya 2010). She describes how she and many other young people insecure both about their present and future joined right-wing organizations. Growing up during the bubble years they were taught the value of money and lived in a materialistic society. Then they saw everything turn into dust in The Great Hanshin Earthquake and felt deep confusion after the Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack in 1995. These people longed for something more. They wanted strong, spiritual values and the feeling of being important and needed in society. They could not feel pride in themselves as poor, unemployed, and unneeded in a materialist society, but as nationalists they could be proud simply as Japanese. They wanted something bigger, indestructible and sacred. People who were left out and

ignored wanted to belong to a community. Many young readers of Kobayashi Yoshinori's manga and Yasukuni worshippers discovered their personal value for the first time through nationalism. Even though Amamiya attended several left-wing meetings during her search for herself, their language was difficult and their books were expensive in contrast to right-wing ones. In right-wing groups she finally found something to believe in. Even though in her case this engagement was temporary, for many others it turned out to be more long-lasting.

The personal story presented by Amamiya is also a manifesto of the 'lost generation'. While it does not apply to all of its members, it presents the dilemmas of a big group as economic problems and unemployment influence young people the most<sup>i</sup>. The relationship between youth nationalism and anxiety related to economical regression is not limited to Amamiya's testimony (see also Takahara 2006, Kondo and Tanizaki 2007, Sakamoto 2011). The studies connect particularly the phenomenon of 'Internet right-wingers' (*netto-uyoku*) to economically troubled youth. Nationalism provides frustrated youth not only reasons to feel personal pride in their ancestry and country, but also an external enemy (in the form of for example Koreans or 'leftists') and temporary relief from their social anxiety. The Internet today gives them a convenient tool to create an anonymous but also intimate community of people with nationalistic views. Therefore, the economic insecurity of young people, nationalism and online activities remain interlinked (cf. Sakamoto 2011).

Young people's need to 'belong' and find something more than the materialist reality of modern capitalism can be satisfied through 'pop nationalism' ('innocent' pride in modern-day Japan), 'nostalgic pop nationalism' (with its fascination with national history), or direct political engagement. Another way is 'popular spiritualism', defined by Akiko Sugawa-Shimada (2015, pp. 51-52) as 'the acceptance of and enthusiasm for spiritual power, deity or something supernatural in those who have little religious faith, while the physical desires for money, status and possessing commodities are still pursued'. 'Popular spiritualism' and 'nostalgic pop nationalism' can be perceived as a different mechanisms for coping with the same problem. Sugawa-Shimada discussed the pilgrimage practices of *rekijo*, who visit historical sites, shrines and temples to connect with the past and historical figures (or their pop cultural avatars). Similar to *rekijo*'s spiritual connection to the past, for some 'fans of war' the feeling of belonging to the line of brave, selfless war heroes can be seen as a cure against uncertainty and loss of

identity. Moreover, both these phenomena are based on idealization of a specific fragment of the past rather than broad contextual knowledge. As Sugawa-Shimada (2015, p. 53) argued, 'idealized and imagined "Japanese identity" and "Japanese-ness" is constructed without truly integrating historical or ideological background'.

The studies of *rekijo*'s 'popular spiritualism' and 'pop nationalism' show that young Japanese take various ways in their search for identity. It can be imagined, as long as it helps young people to feel better, and support their struggle to find meaning in a complicated modern world full of relativism. 'Nostalgic pop nationalism' focused on the Asia-Pacific war is closely related to these phenomena and helps individuals identify positively as members of the Japanese nation.

### **Spectrum of war memories perception**

Throughout the thesis I refer to the ideological engagement of 'fans of war' and compare the messages within their productions to the ideological spectrum of war representations in mainstream war-themed works. I draw heavily on Seaton's concept of 'judgmental memory' (2007, pp. 19-22), and his division of Japanese ideological readings of the war into four basic groups: progressives, progressive-leaning, conservatives and nationalists. A group outside the spectrum is the 'don't know don't cares', who are not interested in the past enough to take any ideological stand regarding it. These definitions refer to the perceptions of history only, and do not refer to levels of political or social engagement.

Progressives interpret the war as aggressive war, and accept Japanese troops committed aggressive acts during the war. They also openly acknowledge Japanese responsibility for waging the war in Asia and consequently against the United States. Progressives acknowledge Japanese war crimes, like the Nanjing Massacre or human experiments conducted by Unit 731, support Japanese compensation and apologies, and assert the need to teach the youngest generations to think critically about the events of the past. Progressives do not take personal pride in the actions of the Japanese during the war, but rather in being able to think critically about the past and courageous enough to face it.

Progressive-leaning people share the position of progressives regarding Japanese aggression, war crimes, and the need for official apologies and compensation, but they give more attention to Japanese suffering at the hands of the Allies and the political and economical situation in the prewar period that 'forced' Japan into waging war. Despite being more reserved in their judgment, they still support the 'aggressive war/acts' position.

The conservative position is the most crucial category for the case studies in this thesis, and therefore requires the most precise definition and differentiation. Carol Gluck defined conservative views as 'if not a just, then perhaps a justifiable war' (Gluck 1993, p. 83). Conservatives believe that Japan committed aggressive acts, but the war itself cannot be called aggressive because of the circumstances. They focus on the narrative of Japanese going to war to protect their loved ones and their homes, and being driven to sacrifice by external circumstances. Conservatives do not actively deny Japanese war responsibility and the crimes committed, but they sideline responsibility discourses or on occasions actively ignore it. In other words, they have *knowledge* of these aspects of the past, but do not *acknowledge* them. However,

[y]ou can't live too long with the emptiness of 'nothing happened'. So 'positive hallucinations' (fantasies, myths, rationalizations, fairy stories, ideologies) come to the aid of the failing denial, fulfilling the hunger for some image. These 'images' are obviously not idiosyncratic and private, but derive from the culture. (Cohen 2001, p. 31)

Thus, conservative images of the wartime past are filled with idealized, nostalgic narratives of 'precious sacrifice'. Conservatives feel deep personal connection to the wartime generation and take pride in being their progeny. Emotionality and emphasis on personal connection are important features of the conservative stance and support the selectiveness of perception. As shown by Welzer, Moller and Tschuggnall (2002) and Welzer (2010), facts concerning a contested national past may exist in the collective memory of a group, but remain neglected in the discussion about one's family. While conservatives may not necessarily reach towards their actual family stories when thinking about the war, their attitude remains strongly personal and emotional, expressing gratitude towards the war generation, identifying with them and seeing

them as role models. Admiration towards the war generation is combined, however, with a reserved attitude towards militarism. Nostalgic 'longing (...) made all the safer by the fact that the object of that desire is deemed irrevocably lost' (Nadkarni and Shevchenko 2004, p. 491) enables the fantasy of heroic sacrifice in the past without the need to act in the present. Moreover, conservatives emphasize also the narrative of Japanese victimhood, focusing on civilian suffering on the home front. The experiences of the victims of A-bombs and air raids are not contextualized within the broader course of the war, but support nevertheless a generic pacifism and the belief that 'war is wrong', a sentiment shared with progressives.

Nationalists, on the other hand, share with conservatives the nostalgic and emotional images of a wartime past they are proud of, but the key element differentiating them is historical revisionism. While conservatives ignore narratives of Japanese aggression and war crimes, nationalists openly deny them. They believe in the 'just war' and 'just acts' of the Japanese during the war. They claim that atrocities and aggression did not happen. They argue that Japan was fighting to liberate Asia from white colonialism, and representations of the war as aggressive are based on lies that should be corrected, for example through school education. Nationalists do not focus on Japanese victimhood, but emphasize rather people's bravery in the fight against Western aggression. In the spectrum of Japanese war memories, they comprise a relatively small group, around 3-5 % (Seaton 2007, p. 19).

Moreover, nationalists as defined above are not necessarily synonymous with the political right wing. *Uyoku* (right-wingers) are extreme nationalists at the far right of the Japanese political scene. They have nationalistic views on Japan's role in World War II, worship the Emperor as the head of the nation, hold strong anti-communist, anti-Korean and anti-Chinese sentiments, and are hostile against mainstream (liberal) media. These views can be expressed during organized street protests, broadcast from propaganda vans driving around town or, as will be discussed more later, on the Internet. Not all nationalists in a war memories sense necessarily share the political and social views of right-wingers.

Finally, the concept of 'nostalgic pop nationalism' that I introduced earlier overlaps mainly with the conservative stance on the spectrum of judgmental war memories, although individuals presenting nationalistic views, and very rarely progressive-leaning people, can also exhibit nostalgic pop nationalism. Its defining

characteristic is taking personal pride in an idealized war past while simultaneously remaining apolitical, distant from Japanese state, and skeptical or oblivious of conservative politicians. 'Pop nationalists' with conservative views on war history therefore represent the majority of the group.

### **Academic approaches towards Japanese war memories**

Japanese war memories have been studied using a variety of disciplinary approaches. Some studies provide a broad, multidisciplinary overview of Japan during the war, life after the defeat, and the difficult process of establishing responsibility for war history on multiple levels (for example Dower 1999, Takahashi 1999, Yoshida 2005, Narita 2010). Others discuss specific aspects of Japanese war memories. The three major approaches can be divided into political studies, a social approach and media/cultural analysis.

A recurring topic in academic works is the political aspect of war issues and its relevance for both domestic and international affairs. Seaton (2007) termed this the 'orthodox' approach to discussion of Japanese war memories and Hiro Saito's (2016) recent monograph *The history problem* focuses exclusively on the political level. Government statements and state commemorations are broadly reported and discussed inside and outside of Japan. They shape significantly perceptions of the way the war is viewed in Japanese society. Official statements also influence the international image of Japan, often rather negatively. An issue that regularly comes up in war-related political discussions is Yasukuni Shrine. For victims and critics of Japanese aggression, the mere existence of the shrine and its nationalistic museum are seen as problematic, as they are associated with a certain vision of history in which Japan was the liberator of Asia rather than an aggressor. Such an interpretation is not acceptable for Japan's neighbors. Therefore, commemorations at Yasukuni and visits by Japanese officials trigger major criticism outside Japan, and also domestically. Especially since the enshrinement of Class A war criminals in 1978, visits by Prime Ministers (particularly on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of the war's end) cause major debate and result in spreading the image of Japan as a country unwilling to acknowledge its wrongdoings and responsibilities. Both John Breen (2008) and Akiko Takenaka (2015) have presented the shrine's background,

history and its changing role, as well as the variety of perspectives on this controversial issue, which remains the symbol of Japan's contested past both domestically and internationally.

Yasukuni Shrine is not the only issue rooted in war history that keeps influencing Japanese domestic and international policy. Hicks (1997), Morris-Suzuki (2007) and Soh (2008) among many others have analyzed the 'comfort women' issue. The comfort women were former Japanese Imperial Army sex-slaves mainly from Korea and China, who in the 1990s started sharing their experiences and demanding apologies and compensation for the fates they suffered. The lack of full acknowledgement of the Japanese government's involvement in the creation of the comfort station system, the issue of compensation payments, and debates over including information about the comfort women into Japanese school textbooks all cause political conflict. Although various attempts have been made to settle the issue at a governmental level, there are still strong voices saying that Japan has not done enough and more effort should be put into compensating the victims for their suffering (see Tanaka 1996 & 2002, Yoshimi 2002).

Both the Yasukuni issue, in which politicians' visits are perceived as jeopardizing the Japanese struggle for reconciliation with victims of Japanese imperialism, and the comfort women issue, in which the sincerity of Japanese regret and apology is constantly questioned, are directly related to the issue of national apologies. These have been analyzed by Jane Yamazaki (2005) and compared to the situation in Germany by Jennifer Lind (2008). Official Japanese apologies have been made on various occasions in the postwar. Apologies by the nation's leaders show all the difficulties related to expressing regret over past wrongdoings that would be considered 'honest' on an international level. These statements are carefully phrased, and read with close attention both within and outside of Japan. Still, the amount of attention they receive internationally and the criticism by both state and non-state actors demonstrates how strongly the war influences current Japanese international relations. As He (2009) argued regarding Sino-Japanese relations, harmonization of national memories is required for interstate reconciliation. Officials' gestures and statements regarding the past echo domestically and internationally, causing and releasing tensions and shaping the image of Japan as a country still troubled by its past. These studies point towards the strong influence of war memories on Japanese politics.

However, the narrative presented by governmental officials and state commemorations do not provide the whole picture of Japanese struggles with war memories. Japanese society remains strongly influenced by the 'cultural trauma' of the Asia-Pacific War (Hashimoto 2015). People are familiarized in different ways with its history from the early stages of education, and actively promote certain narratives via social movements. So called 'victim consciousness' is considered a vital part of today's pacifist image, which characterizes Japanese as a nation opposing military conflict and constitutionally rejecting war engagement. James Orr (2001) presented factors forming Japanese victim consciousness in the early postwar period. The focus of American occupation forces on the 1941-1945 period of war allowed many Japanese to set aside imperialism in South-East Asia. Simultaneously, the anti-nuclear movement emphasized Japan's role as A-bomb victims, both of which influenced Japanese war memories, highlighting the countries' role as victim rather than victimizer.

The A-bomb experience lies at the core of Japanese war memories. Today there are many memorials and large-scale annual commemorations, although this national trauma did not become the center of public attention until 1954 and the hydrogen bomb fallout near Bikini Atoll (Saito 2006, Okuda 2010). Today it is also the fundamental component of Japanese peace education. School education combines the content of state-approved textbooks with many media- and pop cultural images presenting the dreadfulness of war. This results in citizens who are relatively unwilling to fight for their country and many Japanese actively oppose remilitarization (Hashimoto 2015). Considering its fundamental role in shaping views of young citizens, history education in Japan since the war's end has been a constant battlefield between nationalists and progressives (cf. Tawara 1997, 2007 & 2008, Hein and Selden 2000, Saaler 2005, Dierkes 2010, Rose 2010). Revisionists have regularly lobbied to present a nationalistic version of the past in junior high school textbooks and to remove content painting Japan in what they perceive to be a negative light from existing ones. The textbook issue is one of the major areas where social movements of different ideological stances collide (Nozaki 2008). Grassroots and civic movements have actively shaped Japanese war memories since the war ended. Nationalistic lobby groups like the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho wo Tsukuru Kai*) remain influential and attract media attention, while more liberal groups remain critical of the state and actively promote peace and progressive historical views (Yamamoto 2004, Seraphim

2006, Szczepańska 2014, Yoshida 2014) The ongoing struggle over the war narrative among various civic groups demonstrates that Japanese society is aware of and actively engages in debates regarding war memory.

Japanese war memories and attitudes toward the past have also been discussed within media and culture studies. Similar to Japanese society in general, television, cinema, manga, anime, newspaper and other media coverage of war-related issues is not uniform. The Japanese media covers the whole spectrum of 'judgmental memory' from nationalists to progressives. Seaton (2007, p. 144) noted in his overview of the ideological spectrum in media that while conservative films are commercially more successful, progressive ones are more critically acclaimed. Still, productions with different ideological angles find an audience and there has been space for them on Japanese cinema screens since the conflict ended.

Manga has been used to spread images of war from personal memories to purely ideological manifestoes. The manga-form autobiographical works of Nakazawa Keiji, Mizuki Shigeru and Tezuka Osamu are broadly known among Japanese citizens (see Chapter 3). They familiarized readers with the wartime past and presented pacifistic message (Fukuma and Yoshimura 2006, Penney 2008, Tanaka 2010, Vollmar 2012). Authors born before the war are not the only ones who depict this period of history. The bestselling revisionist manga of Kobayashi Yoshinori were widely discussed in Japan and raised concerns abroad about the nationalistic interpretation of history they promote (Sakamoto 2008, Seaton 2010, Shields 2013). Popular manga is recognized as shaping young people's sense of history (Rosenbaum 2013, Otmazgin and Suter 2016). Anime representations of the wartime past have probably received less academic attention, but the popularity of titles such as *Hotaru no haka* (Grave of the fireflies) attests to their importance in the formation of war memories (Napier 2005, Goldberg 2009).

Popular culture, therefore, is recognized as a powerful voice in the national debate about war memories. It influences the audience's perception of the past while being easily and pleasantly consumed. However, the mainstream popular culture discussed thus far is not the only form of popular war representation. Amateur works or fan productions are an important yet little-studied genre of war representations, and are the main focus for the analysis in the remainder of this thesis.

## **Chapter 2.**

### **War memories as seen in fan productions**

This study looks at Japanese war memories through the lens of fan productions created by ‘fans of war’, young people who reach to war history as an inspiration for the works they create for entertainment as a hobby. I will analyze the content of war-related *dōjinshi* (fan comic books), music, fan videos (including Vocaloid compositions), and military cosplay. All of these works or activities are non-commercial and not subject to many of the limitations faced by mainstream, commercial works. While the narratives presented were my primary interest, the study is supported by numerous interviews with creators, which shed light on their motivations and broader fannish practice.

#### **‘Fans of war’ as participants in modern otaku culture**

Henry Jenkins (2012) described fans as ‘individuals who maintain a passionate connection to popular media, assert their identity through their engagement with and mastery over its contents, and experience social affiliation around shared tastes and preferences.’ Following Jenkins, in this study I define fans as people attached, dedicated and devoted to something, like a specific work, or character (fictional, semi-fictional or historical), creator/performer or a certain form of activity that they can engage in both actively and passively, like sport, cosplaying or using Vocaloid software. ‘Fans of war’ are interested in different types of medium, are consumers of different fandoms and take inspiration from various sources, but what connects them all is active engagement with Asia-Pacific War narratives. Not only do they consume war-related content, but also they use the war narratives to actively create something new as a form of personal entertainment, but also often for other fans to enjoy. In this way, fan productions are a bottom-up retelling of war narratives, and medialized works sharing certain (historical or imagined) war images.

General discourse concerning fans, however, is not enough to discuss elements of Japanese fan culture. Japanese fans cannot be separated from ‘otaku culture’, namely ‘subculture strongly linked to anime, video games, computers, science fiction, special-effects films, anime figurines, and so on’ (Azuma 2009, p. 3). Otaku are primarily

associated with popular culture consumption, yet the online *Oxford English Dictionary* (2004) gives the definition of 'otaku' as 'a person extremely knowledgeable about the minute details of a particular hobby (esp. a solitary or minority hobby); *spec.* one who is skilled in the use of computer technology and is considered by some to be poor at interacting with others'. The aspect of otaku being 'knowledgeable' in the area of their hobby is particularly relevant for analyzing the activities of 'fans of war'. The word '*otaku*' implies the constant desire to learn more about the hobby, either for profit or for pleasure, and the sense of pride in being able to trade in knowledge of things that are often cutting edge' (Galbraith *et. al.* 2015, p. 131).

'Fans of war' remain close, or belong to otaku culture. Some of them engage in war-related fan productions exclusively. Such people perform only military cosplay or produce videos dedicated to war movies. For the vast majority, however, 'war' is only one element of their fannish interest. They touch upon various themes in their productions, among which some are dedicated to war narratives and others are rooted in manga, anime or games- related franchises. Many fan events (conventions) or online platforms (video-sharing sites, discussion boards, social sites) are dedicated to a certain form rather than content. As a result, war-oriented fans occupy the same areas as otaku both online and in real life. Although not all 'fans of war' can be considered otaku, there is a major overlap between both groups, and some characteristics of manga and anime consumers are shared by young people producing war-related fan works. One of them, visible to different extents in all the case studies, is the thorough research in the area of the individual's interest, which reflects the desire for deep, expert level knowledge characteristic for the whole otaku community.

The beginnings of otaku culture date back to the 1970s, and so do certain types of fan productions. The *dōjinshi* market developed in the 1970s, and the first fan videos appeared at the beginning of the 1980s. The mid-1980s witnessed also birth of cosplay practice. However, it was not until the Internet became broadly accessible that the scale of fannish practices grew rapidly and almost limitless circulation became possible. Consequently, the fan productions discussed in this study were created mainly after 2005. In the mid-2000s, various Internet platforms crucial for fan productions were developed: YouTube in 2005, NicoNico Dōga, Twitter and Cosplayers Archive in 2006, and Pixiv in 2007. These platforms enabled social networking and fan productions exchange in the form known today. Although both otaku culture and war-related fannish

practices like military modeling existed before Internet-era, their massive spread (as well as creation of new ones, like Vocaloid compositions) dates back to the mid-2000s. For this reason, the works discussed are limited to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and for the most part their creators were born in 1980s and later.

On the one hand, young people's fannish interest in war narratives is rooted in the history boom and nostalgia for the past, as discussed above. On the other hand, the modes of engagement of 'fans of war' with historical narratives strongly resembles the modern style of general otaku behavior and consumption. In *Otaku. Japan's database animals* (2009) Azuma Hiroki analyzed otaku, who in his approach are people 'who fanatically consume, produce, and collect comic books (*manga*), animated films (*anime*), and other products related to these forms of popular visual culture and who participate in the production and sales of derivative fan merchandise' (Azuma 2009, p. XV). The starting point for Azuma and his model of fan consumption is the 'decline of the grand narrative', a theory presented by Jean-François Lyotard in 1979.

Modernity was perceived and explained through the grand narrative, meaning the systems and values that 'made sense out of the history' on the political, economical and ideological level, giving societies the belief that events are interconnected, resulting from each other, and that society is constantly developing and progressing into the future. Postmodernity brought about a crisis for this narrative: the bonds creating stable social structures loosened, rules became less binding, and people as individuals lost faith in the big, universal narrative. Azuma stated that otaku culture is a response to this decline. Otaku are trying to replace 'the grand narrative' by filling their lives with the subculture, with elements collected by media consumption (Azuma 2009, p. 28). Following Azuma's reasoning it appears that otaku culture is, in a way, another type of response to the same problem as the 'popular spiritualism' of *rekijo* and nationalistic 'memory boom'. It is the search for 'something bigger' – something that can give an individual value and meaning,

Although Azuma rooted his discourse in the downfall of the 'grand narrative', nationalistic ideology is an example of such a grand narrative. It gives its believers a framework explaining their place in the world, providing them with national continuity and the feeling of belonging by creating a community of people sharing the same history and worldview. Nationalist movements show that at least this type of 'grand narrative' is

still present in modern world, and its believers do not need 'surrogates' in the form of 'little narratives'.

The situation looks different for 'nostalgic pop nationalists', who despite fascination with the past do not share a nationalistic worldview in general. Ōtsuka (1989) argued that via the consumption of 'little narratives', or single elements like toys or episodes of the series, the consumer gets access to the whole 'grand narrative'. He called the consumption of numerous elements of the same universe the process of 'narrative consumption'. This concept is very close to what Matt Hills called 'hyperdiegesis' - 'the creation of a vast and detailed narrative space, only a fraction of which is ever directly seen or encountered within the text, but which nevertheless appears to operate according to principles of internal logic and extension' (Hills 2002, p. 137). Fictional universes have their own history, geography, religions, political systems and technology that fans could discover through the consumption of the franchise. Learning the world's details ultimately allows fans to extend the universe in their derivative productions. 'Little narratives' of war consumed and reproduced in the form of fan productions are elements of a nationalistic 'grand narrative'. While nationalists embrace the whole narrative, 'nostalgic pop nationalists' seem to stay attached to the 'little narratives', without progressing towards nationalistic ideology as a whole.

Azuma argues the existence of 'postmodern otaku', meaning fans who do not search for greater systems and entire universes in their consumption practices. Just the data and facts of the fictional world are in demand, not a bigger meaning they could be combined into (Azuma 2009, p. 36). This type of consumption was labeled '*chara-moe*', the feeling of *moe* (very strong interest, fascination with) towards a character or characteristic features presented on screen. Popular elements like maid uniforms, cat ears or loose socks were often related to a character's eroticization (Galbraith 2009). This assembly of characteristic elements that attract fans is what Azuma calls the 'database'. Particular elements belonging to it are recognized by consumers in the popular works, but also used as a base for derivative works.

In the same way that 'postmodern otaku' chose *moe*-elements without linking them into the grand narrative, 'nostalgic pop nationalists' express fascination with idealized, nostalgic images of the war past without placing them into the full contextual framework. The same 'little narratives' that for nationalists become components of the 'grand narrative' are for 'nostalgic pop nationalists' the war *moe*-elements. Medialized

clichéd images like a young, noble *tokkō* pilot writing a letter to his loved one or the handsome officers on the battleship *Yamato* evoke strong emotional reactions and the attachment of fans. They remain, however, selectively picked ‘elements’ and are not set within the ‘grand narrative’ of war. This enables convenient ignorance towards many controversial issues. War *moe*-elements are the ones heavily used in mainstream pop culture. They are willingly consumed by fans, and are also those reproduced most often in fan productions. Nostalgic selectiveness in the treatment of history, therefore, is a mechanism of narrative consumption natural in modern-day otaku culture, to which many of ‘fans of war’ belong.

Okamoto Takeshi (2015, p. 17) followed Azuma’s analysis of the social effects of grand narrative decline in the discussion about otaku tourism:

[B]ecause it is difficult to reconstitute the lost ‘grand narrative’, groups of like-minded people gather together and produce ‘small narratives’ that give meaning to them as individuals. Belief in these small narratives is shared with groups of like-minded others in ‘island universes’. (...) The ‘grand narrative’ no longer exists, so people must construct meanings themselves that give power to the ‘little narrative’.

Although the non-existence of a ‘grand narrative’ can be contested in the light of nationalism, ‘fans of war’ visibly search for a like-minded community. In many cases they create groups of people sharing their interests and hobby, while their productions usually reach consumers with a similar worldview. Consequently, their views are rarely challenged, even if they are available on open access websites and in places where fans of different types gather.

This is strongly related to the ‘echo chamber effect’, in which like-minded people create online communities where critical or questioning opinions are underrepresented. It causes certain platforms like *2-channeru* (an unmoderated Japanese Internet forum) or NicoNico Dōga (a Japanese video sharing site that requires user registration) to gather mainly nationalistic Internet users (Sakamoto 2011). This phenomenon assures creators that certain content on specific platforms will be welcomed. While international platforms like YouTube can provide a greater range of opinions, in

Japanese-speaking cyberspace conservative and nationalistic voices are relatively stronger than they are in real life.

### **Fans as producers**

War *moe*-elements, war narratives, pop culture and general trends among fandoms are the main elements that when combined allow 'fans of war' to create their works. Fans' cultural activities cover a broad range including fan art, fan videos, cosplay, *dōjinshi* (fan comics), *dōjin soft* (called also *dōjin* games, namely fan-produced games often based on preexisting stories and characters), fan fiction (derivative stories written by fans), song covers, and original musical compositions referring to a certain fandom. For the global fan community different forms of fan productions remain a sign of a fan's involvement and devotion to a fandom, but they are also a means of self-expression. Via their fannish activity fans get to express their aesthetic preferences, engage in unique activities, find a place in a group of similar people, and visibly express their own identities. The meaning of self-expression in fan production is especially interesting when it comes to using historical narratives. Classics historian John Elsner (1994, p. 226) conducting research on ancient Rome and Greece commented about cultural memory:

What matters (...) is not that [a particular account of the past] be correct by our standards or anyone else's, but that it be convincing to the particular group of individuals (...) for whom it serves as an explanation of the world they inhabit. [W]hat matters about any particular version of history is that it be meaningful to the collective subjectivities and self-identities of the specific group which it addresses. In other words, we are not concerned with 'real facts' or even a coherent methodology, but rather with the consensus of assumptions and prejudices shared by the historian (...) and his audience.

These words are highly relevant when discussing war-themed fan productions. Fan-creators presenting a particular narrative are not historians in any professional sense, but nevertheless present a version of historical events to their (usually Internet]

audience. Even if not fully aware of this fact, they are popularizing certain images and narratives for other users to consume. They do not prioritize historical accuracy, as keeping it was not their main objective. What they aim at is presentation of the past as they imagine it, seen through their emotions and interests. Some elements, therefore, can be presented with great care for the details important for the author (for example, cosplay outfits or the depiction of warfare in fan-made animations), while other aspects can be simultaneously ignored.

For young people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in countries where daily access to the web is standard, the Internet is often the platform for distinctive behavior, self-expression and creating social bonds. The accessibility of software makes fan production a highly egalitarian practice. It gives any individuals with a computer, Internet access, some free time and enough imagination a chance to express themselves in this way. Cyberspace provides platforms to share the outcome of the creative process free of any distribution costs. It makes creators comfortable, as they can choose to remain anonymous, create an online identity that will be recognized on different websites (for example use the same pseudonym on Twitter, YouTube, personal blog etc.), or provide information concerning their real life identity. Optional anonymity supports freedom of expression, as creators do not need to be too concerned about criticism and the potential effects of online statements on their real lives. Still, their works can reach thousands of consumers and be a reason to feel pride and satisfaction in one's creation. Creators of digitally published fan productions enjoy close to unlimited creative freedom, restricted only by the fan's artistic vision, on one hand, and the will to create a popular work enjoyed by a potentially high number of viewers on the other. New media, therefore, provide the means for creators to find inspiration, create and share their works with a like-minded community without influencing their real lives if they do not wish it.

The Internet also plays a vital role in community creation, as analyzed by Lawrence Eng (2006) using the example of United States online anime fans networks. Discussing their interests and hobbies on dedicated websites, posting pictures, commenting on somebody else's creations and finally uploading their own works, young people engage in online interactions that can, but do not have to result in real-life meetings. The Internet allows people with hobbies of limited popularity (like military cosplay) to stay in constant touch via social media, or enables creator—consumer contact and feedback on Twitter, Pixiv and other platforms. Cyberspace, therefore,

validates fan production by providing an easy way of finding consumers. Roberta Pearson (2010) argued, moreover, that wide access to the Internet and the general major technological developments of last two decades have gradually empowered fans. Industry recognized fans' positive reception voiced online as an essential condition for a work's commercial success, and fan productions could be indicators of trends among consumers as well as a 'free commercial' causing growing interest in a particular title. Pitzer (2011, p. 123), in her work dedicated to the *Smallville* fandom, stated:

The visibility of fans as producers (...) can help generate fan visibility, spark enthusiasm for the series, rekindle interest among former fans, or introduce new males and females of all ages and demographics to the series by the way of contagious online fan enthusiasm.

Jenkins (1992, p. 208) described fans as 'consumers who also produce, readers who also write, spectators who also participate'. While creativity is not a condition of being a fan (Hills 2002, p. 30), it is clearly present in many fandoms. Through their productions, fans become active creators of fan culture, 'a culture that is produced by fans and other amateurs for circulation through an underground economy and that draws much of its content from the commercial culture' (Jenkins 2006, p. 285). Also 'fans of war', as mentioned before, are consumers of commercial culture in the first place – mainly movies, but also comic books, books, and even documentaries or museums. They are inspired by content, but also by form. They reflect in their productions popular trends and tropes present broadly in popular culture without relation to war history. As a result of this external inspiration, they produce their own works in the form that they feel expresses the topic and themselves best.

### **The influence of mainstream works and role of emotional narratives**

War-themed fan productions are a visible effect of the medialization of war memory. Eigler (2005, p. 18) defined medialization as 'the immense influence of the visual media and information technology on the blurring between fiction and reality, a phenomenon that has far-reaching implications not only for our sense of the past but

also for our sense of the present and future.’ Fan productions are rooted in popular culture and reflect certain trends visible in mainstream productions. High emotionality is one of the key features of high-grossing popular mainstream war representations. Consumption of these works results in an emotional response called *kandō*.

*Kandō* literally means ‘feelings moved’ and is used to express being deeply touched, moved or impressed by something. According to Tokaji Akihiko (2003, pp. 236-237), *kandō* as an emotion is difficult to define. It is a mixture of different feelings like joy, sadness, sympathy, astonishment and respect, and is often an emotional response to a presented story or work of art. Horie Shūji (2006, p. 176) states that *kandō* is not built into any work of art by default – it is the emotion evoked in the viewer as a result of consumption of a particular work. *Kandō* is strongly related to sympathy toward a character to whom the viewer can positively relate. It often brings tears to people’s eyes, but is a positive emotion actively sought by consumers. This is shown by the popularity of *kandō suru hanashi* (moving stories) and *nakeru hanashi* (stories to make one cry). These are short touching stories, usually claimed to be inspired by real life events, that are shared on various Internet sites. There are numerous rankings recommending novels, movies and TV shows according to how much they cause consumers to shed tears. In the case of war narratives, nostalgia for times that cannot be restored offers a chance to create fictionalized stories (even if based on fact) and mythologized heroes that viewers can relate to, sympathize with and admire. Consequently, *kandō* narratives are strongly related to conservative representations of the wartime past, and the tragic sacrifice of an innocent, peace-loving hero is a narrative cliché evoking *kandō* among viewers. Furthermore, strong emotional responses connected to conservative narratives of love, loss, courage and sacrifice of wartime generation can strengthen national sentiment among the audience with the ‘vividness’ of the presented content.

Noël Carroll (1998) emphasized the role of simple emotions in understanding mass art, since emotions are what guide viewers’ attention and connects them to the events presented in the pop cultural narrative. The more vivid the information, the more emotional interest it evokes, the greater its impact on the receiver, and the better it will be remembered (cf. Nisbett and Ross 1980). Simple but strong emotions evoked by conservative war representations will stay with the audience longer and in a more vivid way than much of the information in textbooks. *Kandō* is broadly considered to be a positive emotion, the experience of which makes the consumer feel good. It is actively

sought by the audience during narrative consumption. Although it is possible to make a connection between *kandō* and narratives of Japanese war responsibility, based on the numerous examples gathered and analyzed in this study this remains a rare phenomenon. In the vast majority of war themed fan productions, *kandō* expressed by the creator and experienced by the audience results from positive identification with the characters presented. It refers also to the shared national identity emphasized by the use of national symbols, as both the 'heroes' in the fan production and the default audience are Japanese. The consumption of war-themed fan productions is a form of entertainment, not requiring much time because of the shortness of productions, but the works still leave a vivid impression because of their emotional weight.

War history as presented in fan productions lies at the crossroads of creators' interest in and historical knowledge about the past, and their pop cultural consumption. It is an image heavily mediated by both war-themed mainstream productions and cultural (particularly otaku culture) trends that influence all fan creators. With the last representatives of the war generation passing away the role of medialized images of the past will grow. There are certain mainstream works that became massive inspirations for 'fans of war' in their creative activities. Action/adventure conservative cinematic blockbusters of the last two decades have provided not only footage for MADs, but also narrative clichés repeated in fan music and Vocaloid composition. One of the most popular movies is *Otokotachi no Yamato* (Yamato [2005]), the story of young Japanese on a journey to learn more about the crew of the battleship *Yamato*, with a focus on the battleship's last mission in 1945. Another film about the wartime navy is *Rengō kantai shirei chōkan: Yamamoto Isoroku – taiheiyō sensō nanajūnenme no shinjitsu* (Yamamoto [2011]), which presents the life of Admiral Yamamoto, who was in charge of planning the Pearl Harbor Attack. The film depicts from the 1930s to his death in 1943. Among works focused not on the military but on civilian suffering, *Hotaru no haka* (Grave of the fireflies [1988]) has attracted fans' attention and inspired mainly the creation of fan videos. Made by the massively popular Studio Ghibli, it presents the story of two young orphan siblings trying to survive in Kōbe during the air raids. Another prominent work inspiring 'fans of war' is *Eien no Zero* (Eternal Zero [2013]). Based on the novel by Hyakuta Naoki, the film follows the story of a troubled young man uncertain about his future on his search to learn the truth about his grandfather, who died as *tokkō* pilot. The protagonist discovers how loving, caring and devoted to his family his grandfather

was, and how much he treasured life and wished for peace, but eventually decided to sacrifice his life in a suicide mission for the greater good. Awareness of being the grandchild of such man finally helps the protagonist to reevaluate his life. Prime Minister Abe was reported to be 'deeply moved' (*kandō shimashita*) by the storyline (Sankei 2013). The movie also resonated with many young people. It inspired the creation of numerous derivative works using the movie's footage, as well as works referring to *tokkō* pilots in general.

The sanitized past as presented by the movies is free of controversies. Instead they focus on love and family values. The same is true for narratives in fan productions. Hashimoto's (2015, p. 77) comment about mainstream 'good ordinary man' narratives is equally applicable to fan productions: 'The message from this fictive genre is disregard the inconvenient memory; there is something worth cherishing about the wartime heritage that can and *should* comprise the backbone of positive national and moral identity'. While this type of message was not invented in the 2000s (*tokkō*-themed movies were popular between the 1950s and 1970s and shared a similar tone, cf. Standish 2006, pp. 174-219), more recent productions are particularly influential among a young audience. With modern special effects and starring popular actors, they remain more attractive for young audiences than their cinematographic antecedents. Consequently, the more recent war-themed blockbusters are the primary source of inspiration for fan productions in terms of heavy emphasis on heroic sacrifice and family bonds, but also spreading specific stereotypes (like the idealized kamikaze-figure) or drawing attention to certain military units (like battleship *Yamato*).

Mainstream productions inspire 'fans of war' not only in terms of the content of fan productions, but also in form. *Kantai Collection* (hereafter *KanColle*) is a mixed-media franchise that debuted in 2013 as a free web browser game. Because of its massive popularity, today the franchise includes manga, light novels, console and arcade games, anime series, and other products. It presents the adventures of wartime navy vessels personified in the form of young, cute girls. Some of the technical features are depicted in the girls' characters and looks, combining *kawaii* (cute) aesthetics with knowledge about the vessels specifications. Although the franchise does not present wartime events, it refers to wartime visual elements and presents detailed information about wartime technology. Moreover, it provides the audience with a *kandō* experience by presenting the 'deaths' of the girls in a very emotional way, as well as portrayal of the

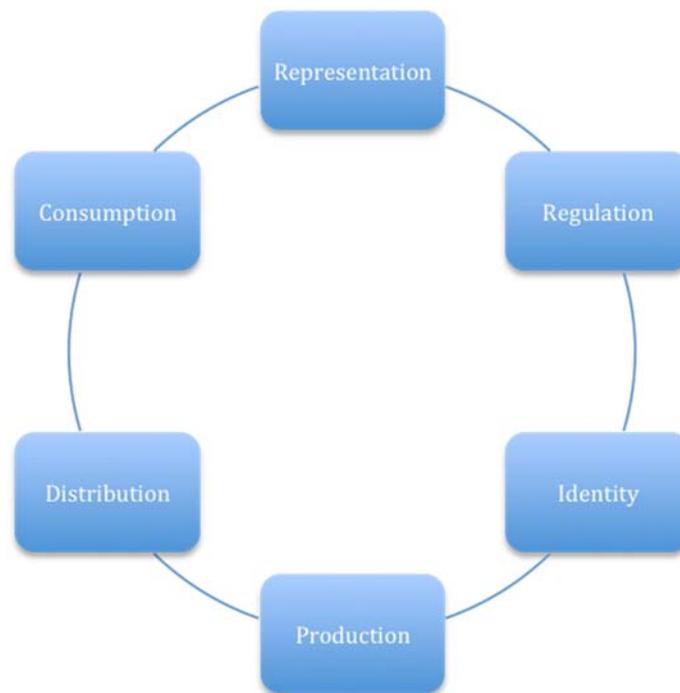
loss and grief of their friends. This highly successful merger of *moe*-elements with elements of war history boosted the general interest of young pop culture consumers in the wartime navy (cf. Seaton *et. al.* 2017, p. 125, Sugawa-Shimada 2018), popularized the representation of warfare using anthropomorphic characters, and strengthened the connection between fans of primarily wartime military and otaku culture. It has become a strong influence on war-themed fan productions.

### **Circuit of culture – defining fan productions**

Considering what Azuma called the ‘propagation of simulacra’ (2009, p. 25), the distinction between the original and derivative works is becoming more and more problematic. Many of today’s manga artists started out as fan creators, and after gaining some popularity pursued a professional career. However, some of them did not give up on fan productions and continued to create fan works alongside commercial works. Fan productions range in quality from poor to the quality seen in commercial works. They differ also in popularity, with some being barely discovered and others (particularly those of high quality) being broadly recognized among fans and introducing new trends in a similar way to mainstream productions. It becomes important, therefore, to present the definition of fan productions I will be using to distinguish commercial and fan productions.

Whether discussing a *dōjinshi* or a popular manga, a music video made with edited movie footage or an original Vocaloid composition, there are features distinguishing fan works from commercial productions. Du Gay et al. created in 1997 the circuit of culture by defining five closely interrelated cultural processes that must be applied to the object of cultural study: representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation (du Gay *et al.* 1997, p. 3). While I use this concept to define fan productions, I modify it by adding a sixth process – distribution. In the twenty years that have passed since the creation of the original circuit of culture, the means of digital distribution has developed and changed the ways that products can be shared and distributed among users. The Internet, as major means of fan production distribution, strongly influences the other elements discussed by Du Gay. Figure 1 shows the

modified circuit, and the descriptions of the six elements in Table 1 relate to how fan productions may be defined using the modified circuit.



**Figure 1 The Circuit of Culture. Du Gay (1997, p. 3) modified by the author.**

Element	Description for Fan Productions
<i>Representation</i>	In a graphic, visual, musical or textual form; signifying positive engagement in a particular fandom, phenomenon or type of activity; expression of fans' personal commentary and wishes towards the fandom as well as a means of self-expression.
<i>Identity</i>	Created by fans for fans, presumably members of the same fandom who have similar knowledge of the fandom, but are not limited by nationality or geography; self-expression of fans as creators, as well as consumers of derivative works.
<i>Production</i>	Produced after the consumption of other (commercial) goods like movies, books, songs etc.; made at home individually or by small groups; the product can be sold, but production does not provide a living income; usually produced anonymously, using a pseudonym.
<i>Consumption</i>	Often free of charge, via the Internet or during fan-conventions; purchase is possible via personal sale or – on limited scale – in

	designated shops and events.
<i>Regulation</i>	Self-regulation of the community and the regulations of the distribution platform (website, event etc.).
<i>Distribution</i>	On the Internet on general (for example, video-sharing) platforms or dedicated (for example, cosplay) websites; in dedicated places for fans (for example, specialized shops, conventions); no engagement of third-party distributors; no promotion or advertising in mainstream/commercial media, but often recommended by other fans via forums, blogs, URL sharing etc.

**Table 1 Elements of the modified circuit of culture as they relate to fan productions.**

Fan productions are understood to be all works to which the above concepts apply. It is useful to contrast these characteristics with those of commercial productions. Discussing ‘commercial’ productions, I do not diversify between marginal, alternative works and widely-known, mainstream ones. Nor do I take into account the artistic value. How the elements of the modified circuit of culture relate to commercial productions is shown in Table 2.

Element	Description for Commercial Productions
<i>Representation</i>	In a graphic, visual, musical or textual form; often advertised even before the release; use of sponsored advertisements and reviews in commercial/mass media to gain interest of the target group; commercial success is the main goal of the representations in the work; main work often supported by (limited) merchandise goods.
<i>Identity</i>	While the work can present the creators’ views, personal engagement and ideology to the consumer, it is primarily a product designed to gain interest and be sold, and only secondarily a means of self-expression; enables a large group of potential consumers to identify with the work (targeting specific groups which are large enough to ensure commercial viability).
<i>Production</i>	Produced by groups of people, using professional equipment and designated work places like studios and publishing houses; involves

	people making a living income via the production process and signing the productions with their names.
<i>Consumption</i>	Requires purchase of the product or tickets, paying for access (for example, Internet streaming sites, TV license/subscription fee), or using an institution providing access to works (for example, libraries); product can be made available for free for promotional purposes.
<i>Regulation</i>	Subject to the legal or moral restrictions concerning visual/verbal content of the distributing organizations or country of distribution; rated for suitability to particular groups; market regulations promoting content that has a bigger chance of being sold.
<i>Distribution</i>	In commercially regulated places such as stores, cinemas, and exhibition halls; via public and private broadcasting; in the form of magazines, books, networked streaming, CDs and DVDs; or digitally in Internet stores and rentals. Buyers can get also benefit from special offers or limited edition goods.

**Table 2 Elements of the modified circuit of culture as they relate to commercial productions.**

This distinction between fan productions and commercial productions underpins the selection of war-themed fan productions that I will analyze in the next four chapters.

### **Overview of thesis structure**

In this chapter I have presented the theoretical framework that informs the four case studies, which each focus on a different form of fan production. A particular focus during the research was the creators' use of historical narratives, how they are influenced by popular culture, and their position on the ideological scale of war memories. Whenever it was possible I reached out the creators to learn about their motivations for this type of activity dedicated to the theme of Asia-Pacific War.

Chapter 3 discusses war-themed *dōjinshi* (fan manga). By analyzing the content of samples gathered during *dōjinshi* fairs and via Internet stores, and through interviews with creators, I focus on the ways that *dōjinshi* combine detailed historical knowledge and popular cultural tropes. Heavily centered on Imperial Japanese Navy

representations, these works are rooted in creators' thorough research into the topic. They are historically accurate, but images are selective and stories focus on biographical episodes of historical figures. They reflect the trends and tropes popular among fans and become a highly entertaining form that not only provides certain amounts of information about war history to the readers, but also encourages them to do further study by providing reference lists.

Chapter 4 focuses on war representations in music. After an overview of the ideological spectrum covered in war-themed commercial compositions, I analyze fan music in relation to mainstream productions. It shows how these productions tend to have a more conservative tone, but also how non-commercial music can voice extreme positions more strongly than mainstream music. This relationship is also reflected in the case of mainstream artists, as more popular ones tend to voice more reserved, vague opinions, and niche musicians take a clearer stand regarding the war in their compositions. Moreover, while still remaining an entertaining fan practice, out of all the discussed forms of productions fan music is the most directly politically engaged. This tends towards the tradition of protest songs.

Chapter 5 discusses two forms of fan production created exclusively with computer software and distributed online in the form of videos. The first form is fan videos, called also fanvids or MADs. These remix third party content like scenes from popular movies, documentaries or photographs and are combined with a music track, usually a pop or rock song. The second form is original compositions made with voice synthesizing software, which are accompanied with original graphics or animations. I show how these productions use a combination of visuals and music to present highly emotional content, condensing the *kandō* experience of their creators evoked by consumption of mainstream works (in the case of videos using movie footage), or telling a short story that despite being an original production reflects the most emotional tropes present in popular war representation, particularly *tokkō* narratives. I discuss creators' motivations for making videos and discuss a possible discrepancy between creators' views and what they express in the content of their works. The emotional narratives may suggest more conservative views than the creator actually holds.

Chapter 6 presents the practice of military cosplay. I focused on two groups: Nazi and Imperial Japanese Army cosplayers. These cosplayers perceive themselves as a separate group from those impersonating anime, manga and game characters. Although

both engage in 'military cosplay', there is a difference in motivations and cosplay activities (photograph taking style, events they attend) between Nazi and Imperial Army cosplayers. The former are cosplaying outside of their identity zone. They are motivated by curiosity and the aesthetic appeal of Third Reich uniforms, but remain aware of Nazi crimes and largely critical of them. The latter are cosplaying within their identity zone, express admiration towards the soldiers they impersonate, look for the connection with national past, and expressing national pride by wearing the wartime uniform. Based on interviews with cosplayers, I discuss the influence of the identity zone on the perception of major historical events.

Chapter 7 summarizes and concludes main observations of this study. The results of the research contribute to knowledge about Japanese war memories in several ways. Through the analysis of narratives presented in fan productions I show their ideological stances are clustered towards the conservative/nationalistic end of scale in comparison with the more even progressive—nationalist spread among mainstream representations. This is due to the connections between entertainment works and conservative narratives, as well as the greater role of emotional rather than intellectual reaction in the creation and consumption of these works. Moreover, I identify the existence of 'nostalgic pop nationalists', who despite sharing conservative views of Japanese war history remain apolitical and do not express support for conservative politics. War history for them is an important part of their identity. It is an element they are proud of and towards which they feel a strong personal connection.

Although limited only by the creativity of producers, these works are heavily influenced by various factors, particularly war-themed works of mainstream popular culture. The analysis provides information about how perceptions of war history are shaped among members of the third post-war generation. It suggests the major influences are media and popular culture, but also family and friends, commemorative sites and school education. The fan productions are made for public consumption and easily accessible, mainly on the Internet. Considering the relative popularity of some of them and the reactions they generate from audiences, war-themed fan productions can echo among consumers and become a medialized war image similar to mainstream productions, despite the different means of circulation. The Internet era enables individuals who wish to remain anonymous to share their works with numerous consumers, blurring the lines between creators and audience. Fan productions can

promote certain historical narratives, if they are considered by the audience attractive enough to catch their attention and evoke an emotional reaction, *kandō*.

Consequently, the study provides information on the role of nostalgic, idealized and heavily mediated war memories, entertainment and conservatism in the process of the identity construction of young Japanese in relation to the war past.

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<sup>i</sup> There was debate following the decision of the Smithsonian Institution to display the Enola Gay as part of the war end exhibition. The planned exhibition was reported as paying too much attention to Japanese casualties resulting from the atomic bombing. See Wittner (2005).

<sup>ii</sup> In 2010 unemployment in the age group 15-24 reached 9.4% with the average unemployment of all age groups together being 5.1% (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2017). Unemployment in the group 15-34 has been visibly above average for the past decade (2006-2016).

### Chapter 3

## Representations of Asia-Pacific War in manga *dōjinshi*

Several war-themed comic books published in Japan have become well known and broadly discussed in academia. Themes include the memories of war generation authors (for example, Mizuki Shigeru), war-related polemic (for example, Kobayashi Yoshinori), and appeals for peace (for example, Tezuka Osamu). In the introduction to their book about the representation of history in manga, Otmazgin and Suter (2016, pp. VI-VII) discussed manga's function of representing historical narratives and conveying the author's beliefs:

As a highly popular medium with a distinct grammar and inner logic made of pictograms, written text and, and visual frames, (...) manga has a strong potential to influence mass opinion. While conceived as a popular medium primarily made to entertain, manga involves the selective construction of narratives based on the opinion of its author, the details she/he chooses to include and those she/he chooses to leave out, the historical and political context at the time of writing, and the historical and intellectual "fashions" of the time, which makes it not only a valuable historical source but also a form of historiographic writing. By depicting historical events and reshaping historical narratives, manga combines information and imagination, fact and fiction, representation and political statement.

These features result from manga's form combining text and visuals with the main purpose of entertainment, and are valid not only for mainstream manga, but also for its amateur version, called *dōjinshi*. While historical representation in mainstream manga has attracted considerable attention, *dōjinshi* remain underresearched. Harrel (2007) notes:

This subculture of *doujinshi* and the people who produce them contains many parallels to the mainstream culture, but exists clearly outside of its boundaries, both legal and cultural, also being distinguished from the commercial industry in terms of demographics: both the authors and target audience of *doujinshi* are primarily female (...).

*Dōjinshi* are created by relatively young artists called ‘circles’ (*sākuru*), which can mean either groups of people working together, or individuals doing all the work on their own called individual circles (*kojin sākuru*)<sup>iii</sup>. As fan-produced works, *dōjinshi* circulate among consumers in different ways, have different forms, and also slightly different thematic foci than mainstream war-themed manga. Many *dōjinshi* are derivative works that borrow characters and narratives from popular mainstream franchises touching upon the theme of war, like *KanColle* or *Hetalia*. Even in the case of so called ‘original’ works, creators are influenced by trends and tropes present in mainstream culture, and reuse them in new contexts. They mix historical events and characters with fictional elements in creative ways, in some cases interpreting facts in a very loose manner. This chapter analyses three aspects of original war-themed *dōjinshi*: first, the detailed research done by creators as an indication of their deep interest in certain aspects of history; second, the popular tropes they reflect, both those in mainstream war-themed works and in other genres; and third, the ideological message these works send. While predominantly conservative, the images of war presented in some *dōjinshi* contain big doses of humor that distance readers from the events, and complicate images of the past.

### **War memories in mainstream manga**

Before discussing *dōjinshi* culture specifically, a brief overview of mainstream war-themed manga is necessary. The first postwar wave of manga depicting the conflict, from the late 1950s to late 1960s, focused primarily on aerial battles. They ignored the home front and presented pilots as heroic, patriotic volunteers fighting over the Pacific (Nakar 2008, pp. 180-181). Representative titles include Kaizuka Hiroshi’s *Zero-sen reddo* (The red Zero) and Tsuji Naoki’s *Zero-sen Hayato* (Hayato the Zero pilot). Both

authors were born in the mid-1930s', so did not experience combat personally. Their works are fictional rather than autobiographical.

Probably the best-known manga today are the autobiographical manga that started appearing in the late 1960s and focused on the suffering brought by the conflict. *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen) by Nakazawa Keiji portrays a six-year-old boy's experiences during the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and his and his friends' struggles in the aftermath of the bombing. Translated into twenty-two languages, Nakazawa's manga became a seminal pop cultural testimony of the atomic bombing. It has been read worldwide, used in peace education in Japan, and analyzed in academic scholarship (Fukuma and Yoshimura 2006, Fukuma, Yamaguchi and Yoshimura 2012, Penney 2012). Mizuki Shigeru's works, including *Sōin gyokusai seyo!* (Onward towards our noble deaths) or *Komikku Shōwa-shi* (Shōwa: a history of Japan), are also well known. Mizuki was born in 1922 and fought in the New Guinea campaigns, an experience that influenced both his supernatural as well as his war-themed works (Suzuki 2011). Mizuki suffered from malaria and lost his arm in an air raid. He presented strong anti-militaristic views in his works, which realistically depict combat (Penney 2008). Similar anti-militarist views infuse the works of Tezuka Osamu, who was drafted into service at a military factory in Osaka. There he experienced an air raid, which was later depicted in his manga *Kami no toride* (The paper fortress) (Tanaka 2010). Although these authors experienced the Asia-Pacific War at different ages and in different ways, their works depict the conflict as destructive and traumatic without falling into a simplified 'victim's narrative' purified by the omission of Japanese responsibility for aggression in Asia.

Post-war generations of mangaka (manga artists) have diversified the topics addressed beyond personal war experiences. Hiroshima-centered pacifistic messages appear in the works of Kōno Fumiyo, such as *Yūnagi no machi, sakura no kuni* (Town of evening calm, country of cherry blossoms). Anti-war narratives also appear also in popular tales from the 'alternative history' genre, like Kawaguchi Kaji's *Jipangu* (Zipang), about a Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel that travels back in time to 1942 and is gradually drawn into the conflict. Such narratives address present-day political affairs, pacifism, and Japan's contemporary military role, as well as being attractive to entertainment-seeking fans of the war/adventure genre.

As argued by Penney and Wakefield (2008), progressive content and openly critical attitudes towards Japan's war can be found in mainstream manga targeting

readers of various ages. Such manga can sell well. Not only do they send pacifistic messages, but they also address graphically Japanese war crimes. *Aru hi ano kioku wo koroshi ni* (One day to kill that memory) by Ishizaka Kei tells a story of a Japanese tourist interacting with a former Korean enforced military sex slave (comfort woman), and his attempts to understand the system of forced prostitution in the Imperial Japanese Army and the harm it did to its victims (Ropers 2013). The plot of Motomiya Hiroshi's *Kuni ga moeru* (The country is burning) revolves around the protagonist's work as a governmental official in Manchukuo. Although it presented both the economic and military violence of Imperial Japan, the biggest controversy related to the manga's portrayal of the Nanjing Massacre. The author was forced to redraw a photograph depicted in the manga that was attacked by nationalists as falsification<sup>iv</sup> (Berndt 2008, p. 309). Such cases show that mainstream manga can address issues of Japanese war responsibility.

There is also a receptive market for manga with conservative and nationalist content. Manga versions of other conservative works, such as the novels of Hyakuta Naoki (for example *Eien no Zero* [Eternal Zero] and *Kaizoku to yobareta otoko* [A man called pirate], both drawn by Sumoto Sōichi), and original manga like Amanuma Shun's *Senkū no tamashii* (Soul of the war sky) can present sentimental narratives invoking feelings of *kandō* (being deeply moved). There are, moreover, cases of best-selling nationalistic manga like the *Kenkanryū* (Hate the 'Korea wave') series by Yamano Sharin and Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Sensōron* (On war), which have generated considerable academic discussion. Kobayashi presents a revisionist portrayal of history, sarcastically criticizes the 'masochistic' view of Japan's past, and attacks China and South Korea for their international politics concerning Japan (see Sakamoto 2008, Seaton 2010, Shields 2013). With a big fanbase and numerous critics both domestically and internationally, Kobayashi's works are probably the best-known example of polemical writing in the manga format.

Commercially successful war-themed manga, therefore, covers the whole ideological spectrum of views on war from progressive to nationalist. However, *dōjinshi* do not exhibit the same range of topics covered in mainstream manga, but rather focus on a different set of narratives and tropes.

## ***Dōjinshi*: definitions, history, circulation and place in academic discourse**

'[D]oujin' stands for the self-publication of fan works in mixed media (e.g., games, music, and comics) and underlines the community aspect that brings the fans together. 'Doujinshi' refers to self-published as a medium which includes comics, light novels and art books. Doujinshi can be homages to existing texts, inspired by anime, manga or game and even Western texts (...). Some belong to the genre 'original', meaning that they feature characters and stories that the artist conceived of him or herself. (Lamerichs 2013, pp. 158-159)

*Dōjin* therefore means various forms of fan works, including music, figurines and games. *Dōjinshi* refers to *dōjin* in printed/paper form. *Dōjinshi* play a big role in Japanese fan culture and have become a vital part of the comic circulation in Japan. The market value of *dōjinshi* in 2012 was estimated at seventy billion yen (Noppe 2014, p. 247), while the whole manga market in 2011 was worth approximately 390 billion yen in sales (Joo *et al.*, 2013, p. 10). *Dōjinshi*-centered events are organized all over the country, and there are several thousand events per year. Comic Market (hereafter Comiket), the biggest *dōjin* fair in Japan, is held twice a year in Tokyo and is the heart of *dōjin* culture. It is the world's largest regular 'festival of self-produced comic, music, and computer games, inspired by popular manga and anime as well as other forms of popular culture' (Lam 2010, p. 232). In addition to *dōjinshi* circulation venues, Comiket provides also a cosplay area, conference rooms and space for company booths. Over the years it has become an important space for the promotion of commercial pop culture products. During Comiket 91 (Winter 2016) 36,000 *dōjinshi* exhibitors presented their works over three days to 550,000 visitors (Comiket 2017).<sup>v</sup>

Regarding the *dōjinshi* phenomenon, Noppe (2014, pp. 2-3) has also noted:

*Dōjinshi* exist in a legal grey area, but they are exchanged on such a large scale that casual observers sometimes mistake them for "official fan fiction" (...). Just like professional manga are the heart of Japan's massive *media mix*, *dōjinshi* sit at the center of a shadow cultural economy of amateur media. *Dōjinshi* are not simply the "amateur" version of professional manga. They represent a mode of distribution that is open to a wide variety of creators at all skill levels and all

kinds of content, one that maximizes the potential of on- and offline infrastructure for creation and exchange, and whose semi-legal flexibility seems to make them more resilient than commercial manga to the technological and cultural changes that are currently sweeping the professional cultural economy in Japan and elsewhere. While the market for print manga has been in decline for well over a decade, sales of *dōjinshi* continue to rise.

Noppe (2014, pp. 68-75) also discusses the issue of how to translate '*dōjinshi*' into English, highlighting the differences between Japanese *dōjinshi* culture and Western fan comics and textual fan fiction. Fan fiction, both in textual and in graphic form, are mainly derivative works, published by amateurs free of charge on the Internet. Fan fiction creators struggle with copyright issue unless they base their works on content in the public domain (seventy years after the creator's death in the US). Some copyright owners strongly oppose the use of their creations as inspiration for fan fiction, while others accept the presence of fan fiction as long as the works remain non-profit and have acceptable content (for example, no pornography) (Wood 2014). *Dōjinshi* in the manga format are much more popular than textual works. Presenting often original content, they are created both by amateurs and professionals, usually with the acceptance of copyright holders who do not oppose their creation being reused in fan-created works<sup>vi</sup>. The works discussed in this chapter are not based on any copyrighted materials, and are thereby fully legal productions.

The history of *dōjinshi* can be traced back to the Meiji period (1868-1912), when literature *dōjin-zasshi* (like-minded magazines) became an important part of the developing literary scene. The first manga *dōjinshi* appeared in the Taishō period (1912-26), mostly created by semi- and professional artists in manga circles. They became truly popular in the postwar period, when many more amateurs started creating manga circles (Lam 2010, pp. 233-234). It was not until the late 1970s, however, that the basic structure of today's *dōjinshi* market became established. In December 1975 the first Comiket took place, providing a new space for *dōjinshi* circulation based purely on the fan community, and without the interference of the mainstream manga industry. It was a 'fan event provided by fans for fans' (Komikku Māketto Junbikai 2005, p. 29). Comiket not only gave circles space to present their works, but also a space for individual fans who were not creators to visit (previous events targeted creators only). At the same

time, technical developments lowered printing costs, opening the market for small groups and even individual artists (Iwata 2004, pp. 46-50). Since 1975, Comiket has become the centre of *dōjinshi* culture and provides a snapshot of the genre: general trends among *dōjin* creators are observable among the works presented during the event.

*Dōjinshi* today are primarily associated with otaku culture. Judging by Comiket booth categories, the majority of *dōjinshi* reuse and reinterpret characters and narratives from mainstream works, often in an eroticized way. Comiket venues are divided into categories such as *shōnen* (targeting young male readers) and *shōjo* manga (targeting young female readers), works dedicated to particular titles, or the works of particular company like Type-Moon<sup>vii</sup> or Square Enix<sup>viii</sup>. Particularly popular titles gain their own category. For example, at Comiket 91, *KanColle* had 2153 circles, *Tōhō Project* 1582 circles, and *Tōken Ranbu* 1478 circles (Hatena 2016). As mentioned by Lamerichs above, there is also a category of ‘original works’ containing numerous creations rooted in manga-aesthetics, but also reflecting the research of creators on a specific issue. At Comiket there were 608 original *shōjo* circles and 1488 *shōnen* circles, and a separate category for ‘History and fiction (novels, literature)’ with 418 circles. These numbers indicate the dominance of derivative works. Moreover, history is not the main interest of *dōjinshi* circles.

The number of *dōjinshi*-related events in Japan has been estimated to be up to three thousand conventions a year, with most having only a few hundred participating circles (Noppe 2014, p. 162). Comiket is the event in which most circles try to participate. It is the most important physical space for presenting one’s works to potential consumers. Members of circles either participate in Comiket personally, or in the case of more popular circles, hire staff to sell their works in the venue. Circles usually prepare from several dozen to several thousand professionally printed *dōjinshi* copies for sale, sometimes offering their older works for free with other promotional materials, like post cards, brochures and business cards (Noppe 2014, p. 150). Older works tend to be cheaper than newer ones. *Dōjinshi* contain the circle’s contact information, including its website, Twitter, Pixiv<sup>ix</sup> account, and e-mail address.

Although the circle’s physical presence at events is crucial for self-promotion, circles promote their works extensively via the Internet. They tend to have a private website containing a blog section about their activities, lists of publications, sample

works, notifications of the events the circle will attend, and links to online shops where works are available. Circles also use social media like Pixiv, where it is easier to discover their works accidentally. On Pixiv, users can find artworks by using tags, so fans of a particular genre can find content of interest to them relatively easily. Pixiv contains mainly fan art in the form of graphics rather than short comics or light novel samples. Artists can be followed, so subscribers are informed about new posts. Circles also tend to have a Twitter account, where they give updates about their work or events, post *dōjinshi* samples, and announce other news about their activities. The popularity of circles is reflected in the number of followers they gather on social media. While attending *dōjin* events is important for the circle to become recognizable, circles with a focus different to pop culture need to rely particularly on the Internet to reach the consumers they are targeting. Given that the otaku's 'main forum for general fan activities has moved to Web sites' (Azuma 2009, p. 7), the importance of the Internet in the circle's self-promotion cannot be underestimated. It increases the possibility of being discovered by potential consumers, and it also creates the ability to communicate with the fans while remaining anonymous. E-mails, Tweets, Pixiv private messages or websites contact forms are ways in which many circles answer readers' questions and receive comments. The creators can do this without providing any information about themselves, a point which is important to some of them.

When selling *dōjinshi*, however, both physical and cyber spaces play a role. Specialized chain stores like Mandarake<sup>x</sup> sell secondhand manga-related goods, and *dōjinshi* fairs allow potential readers to browse and purchase available titles. Online shops like Suruga-ya<sup>xi</sup> and Toranoana<sup>xii</sup> specialize in fan works. They offer a variety of *dōjinshi* categorized according to popularity, genre and circle. Sometimes physical copies are mailed to buyers, while some purchase and download digital copies. Online shops are rarely used for distribution by the smallest circles that print out only several dozen copies of their works and operate at rather basic levels (in terms of artistic skill, production quality, and effort put into self-promotion), but online shops still sell many works of small to well-known circles.

Despite the scale of the phenomenon and its economic and cultural significance, not much research concerning the *dōjinshi* market has been conducted in English or Japanese. As Noppe (2010, p. 24) notes, in both languages 'content analysis of *dōjinshi* (as opposed to that of commercially published manga) is extremely rare. *Dōjinshi* do

feature in English-language research on occasion, but they are almost always discussed because of their legal significance, not as objects of literary study'. This is also the case for Japanese research, in which issues regarding copyright are debated (see Yonezawa 2001). *Dōjinshi* are mentioned in analysis of the evolution of manga, where the 'grand narrative' loses importance, and characters function perfectly without a backstory, but can be placed by fans in new contexts and relationships (cf. Itō 2006, Azuma 2009,). These works are connected to the 'boys' love' (*yaoi*) genre, portraying homosexual relationships (Galbraith 2009, Saito 2011). Until now, the most extensive English-language research concerning *dōjinshi* was conducted by Nele Noppe (2014), who focused on *dōjinshi* exchange as an economic system, but also presented a closer look at *dōjinshi* history, form, and creators. Still, as Noppe (2010, p. 125) noted, 'the actual contents of the works these fans produce remain largely unexamined except in the broadest of terms'. This chapter examines, therefore, what types of narratives are presented, in what ways, and using what kind of resources.

### **War-related *dōjinshi* as seen at Comic Market 90 (Summer 2016)**

This section uses data gathered at Comic Market 90 in August 2016 (hereafter "Comiket 90") to provide an overview of the market for war-related *dōjinshi*. As the biggest event where circles gather, Comiket provides a relatively representative overview of the *dōjin* market. During Comiket 90, in the category of 'History and fiction (novels, literature)' there were booths run by 454 circles (Hatena 2016). Based on the event catalogue, 132 circles focused their work on historical representation. Circles did not limit themselves to comic books. Some also presented historical works in academic-style books and leaflets, light novels, and self-published war-themed family testimonies. Diverse periods and themes were represented, including the Heian (794-1185) and Bakumatsu (1853-1867) periods, samurai culture, narratives referring to *The romance of the Three Kingdoms*<sup>xiii</sup>, homosexuality in the military, the history of the Roman and Ottoman empires, nineteenth century Uruguay, war in Syria, and short stories about Hitler's personal life. There are practically no limits concerning the narratives presented other than the personal interest of the creators, and the form varies freely from mostly

fictional adventure or romance stories set in the period to detailed historical studies avoiding any fictional elements.

In the 'history' category about ten circles produced works focusing on World War II: three depicted events related to Nazi history, six to Japanese war history, and one presented comics about both. The numbers of circles is not the number of works produced. The number of *dōjinshi* per circle varies from one to more than ten, all discussing the same theme. One creator told me that a circle is often associated with a particular topic. The same artist can host more than one circle to create works in quite different genres, for example historical manga and derivative manga based on a video game (nekosaji 2017).

Works produced by circles vary both in form and content. Nakamura Yōtarō<sup>xiv</sup> decided to self-publish in book form his grandfather Nakamura Takeshi's poems and memories from his time in the Soviet Union as prisoner of war in Siberia. A group called Yamato Yukiwara<sup>xv</sup> published light novels and short stories about Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service pilots, including *tokkōtai*, with original art on the books' covers. Hugu to Doitsu Teikoku, known also as Kitajima Yūjin, sold thin booklets with short stories based on Nazi history. The circle Arayashiki produced materials presenting the history of the Czechoslovak Republic under Nazi occupation. Ōtake Naoko<sup>xvi</sup> published semi-fictionalized stories about homosexual relationships between Imperial Army soldiers, illustrated with original art or in manga format. This circle's main interest is homoerotic relationships, and their publications tell stories from different periods (mainly the Sengoku period). Five circles produced manga exclusively. Three of them, mamezawa, Egetsunayanke, and nekosaji, tell Asia-Pacific War stories. Ninomaehajime<sup>xvii</sup> (aka Otto Ohlendorf: the person uses a German pseudonym in addition to a Japanese one) produces manga with stories set in Nazi Germany. Akitsuki<sup>xviii</sup> combines both, dividing each of her comic books into two parts: one dedicated to Imperial Navy (particularly lieutenant commander Itakura Mitsuma), and the other to Nazi officers, especially field marshal Erwin Rommel.

Overall, these seven *dōjin* circles produced around thirty works relating to the Asia-Pacific War. In the context of the 36,000 circles presenting their works during Comiket 90 these numbers certainly appear marginal, but they should not be ignored. They create high-quality original works and, judging by their online presence and activities, have substantial groups of readers. They have received little attention in

academic discourse in comparison with commercial manga, but they are still a part of Japanese war narratives as presented within pop culture.

### Three circles

Some of the issues relating to *dōjinshi* will be discussed with reference to the activities of three *dōjin* circles encountered during Comiket 90 that have created manga about the Imperial Japanese Navy during the Asia-Pacific War.

- 1) nekosaji<sup>xix</sup>: a nostalgic depiction of a veteran's memories as he remembers his duty on the carrier *Zuikaku*. By 2017, nekosaji had created three works concerning *Zuikaku* officers.
- 2) mamezawa<sup>xx</sup>: the adventures of personified battleships. Mamezawa had produced two works about the *Hiei*, two about the *Musashi*, and one about the *Mikasa*.
- 3) Horie Kaniko from the circle Egetsunaiyanke<sup>xxi</sup>: humorous short stories involving a variety of historical figures. Egetsunaiyanke has created more than ten such volumes.

I will focus in detail on one representative work from each circle: nekosaji's *Yuki ni hana wo omoite* ('Thinking of flowers in the snow', hereafter *Yuki ni hana*), mamezawa's *Hiei to kanchō* (*Hiei and the Captain*), and Egetsunaiyanke's *Shōwa nihongun sairokuhon 2001.12-2002.12* ('Japanese army of Shōwa period. Compilation 2001.12-2002.12', hereafter *Shōwa nihongun*). These works are based on extensive research by the authors and conform closely to the historical record. While analyzing these works, I focus primarily on the content, but also discuss the production process. I will discuss *dōjinshi* historical representations, their inspirations, and ideological messages.

### Historical representation of Asia-Pacific War-themed *dōjinshi*

*Dōjinshi* tend to focus on individual perspectives with big-scale history forming the backdrop. Through episodes from the protagonists' lives, readers can learn about major historical events, but the individual remains centre stage. In most cases circles produce biographies of historical figures, but the narratives can also be influenced by

soldiers' testimonies, family stories, or even be based entirely on a family member's war experience. The first type seems to be the most common, and many works present the lives of relatively little-known individuals in entertaining ways for the reader, while adhering to known facts. *Dōjinshi* presenting family testimony are less popular, but remain an option for those with mangaka skills, for example Ozawa Yuki, whose *Kōri no te* (Hand of ice) was published in three volumes between 2008 and 2010. The *dōjinshi* tells Ozawa's father's experiences as a Soviet prisoner of war in Siberia<sup>xxii</sup>. Testimonies can also be published as textual *dōjinshi* (without illustrations), like in the case of Nakamura Takeshi's Siberian memoirs (mentioned above). From this perspective, *dōjinshi* is a form of amateur historiography, fitting into the broad category of *jibunshi*, 'self-history', namely

any kind of amateur historiography (that is, "history-writing"), regardless of form and medium, that takes as its base reconstructed memories of one's own individual life experiences and places them in relation to broader historical events, from local to regional, national, and even global levels (Figal 1996, p. 904).

Although the *dōjinshi* creators are too young to have war experiences, they are amateurs presenting in a highly personalized way the individual's fate (whether a historical figure or family member), and set these biographies against the backdrop of large-scale historical events.

Buchholz (2011) has analyzed the history of *jibunshi* and its role in shaping Japanese war memories. She noted that personal accounts of war started appearing in magazines in the 1950s, and the *jibunshi* movement spread extensively from the late 1970s. As the self-publication business emerged, aspiring writers were supported by writing courses and numerous competitions run by newspapers and television. The peak of *jibunshi* writing was around 1985 as the war-generation retired. Individuals between the ages of sixty and eighty had more time to write, and word processors made the process technologically possible. Regarding motivations for writing *jibunshi*, Buchholz identifies recollection of the author's youthful enthusiasm for the fatherland, criticism of the war from present-day perspectives, warnings to post-war generations against repeating the mistakes of the past, writing a requiem for the dead, and their

duty to commemorate deaths they witnessed. Although many authors confirm that they actively and willingly contributed to war effort, 'the vast majority of amateur Japanese story writers write about the war from the point of view of the victim' (Buchholz 2011, p. 209). Seaton (2007, p. 172) echoes this conclusion that the majority of published testimony is civilian testimony, and/or testimony of victimhood. Consequently, *dōjinshi* are characteristic for focusing on the military rather than the home front, and the most common topic encountered during my research is a personal account of a family member's victimhood experience during internment in Siberia. The biographical stories of historical figures portray their protagonists as dedicated military members, but also as primarily likeable human beings. Buchholz (2011, p. 211) concludes her *jibunshi* study stating that '[*jibunshi*] is a distinctive mark of how people contribute actively to memory construction'. These personal accounts became an important part of Japanese popular culture and helped shape collective memories. As the postwar generations have taken over the mantle of presenting personalized narratives of war experiences, some characteristics of *jibunshi* have been inherited by circles creating war-themed *dōjinshi*.

Otmazgin (2016, p. 11) stated that 'manga portrays history with vivid visuality, thus inducing emotional responses from readers in a degree that textual reading alone cannot achieve. (...) [B]eing exposed to manga may provide readers with new mediums to perceive and visualize the past'. He introduces the concept of 'banal memory' (Otmazgin 2016, p. 12), and gives manga as an example of where history is being reconstructed through 'banal', everyday, and hardly-noticed activities. Both war-themed manga and *dōjinshi* are read as entertainment, but they present historical facts and narratives and can therefore broaden readers' awareness concerning the wartime past.

All three circles may present different angles in the representation of war history, but they remain similar in that all focus on personas and events related to the Imperial Japanese Navy rather than the Army. One of the creators, mamezawa, when asked about the predominance of the navy in *dōjinshi*, suggested a connection to the general belief in the 'good navy and bad army' (*kaigun zendama/rikugun akudama*) theory. The Navy is seen as opposing war, even though this was due to awareness of the United States' military superiority rather than a belief in the wrongness of war per se (Griess 2002, p. 12). Conversely, the Army is associated with controversies like the 'comfort women' issue, Nanjing massacre, and Class A war criminals. Marine warfare is seen as more 'honorable' and 'modern' than ground warfare, not only in Japanese war discourse but

also for example in Germany and the United States, and its image is broadly used to promote a narrative of a 'clean' war (Saaler 2014). Naval officers, therefore, are less problematic for *dōjin* artists, even though narratives about the Navy are not used to portray the war as wrong and promote an anti-war position. In addition to responsibility issues, the ships and white navy uniforms are seen as aesthetically pleasing, and therefore more appealing to both male and female readers (mamezawa 2017). There were more *dōjinshi* in text form about the army<sup>xxiii</sup>, but the manga circles prefer drawing Navy uniforms and ships. The great popularity of *KanColle* also evokes broader interest among readers and creators in the Navy (nekosaji 2017).

All works focus primarily on historical personas, without introducing fictional main characters for plot purposes, as often happens in mainstream manga. Nevertheless, in each of the presented works, historical figures are treated in different manners. The main characters of nekosaji's *Yuki ni hana* are vice admiral Kaizuka Takeo, commander of the aircraft carrier *Zuikaku*, and navy lieutenant Takai Tarō. The former went down with his ship in 1944, and the latter served on the same carrier but was rescued and died aged 91 in 2011. The manga presents mainly the memories of Takai about his relationship with Kaizuka. Meanwhile, mamezawa's *Hiei to kanchō* has three main characters, but only two human, since one is a personified battleship, the *Hiei*, in the form of a young boy. The manga presents Hiei's relationship with his two commanders, admiral Inoue Shigeyoshi and later captain Nishida Masao. The manga presents brief episodes from Hiei's 'life' with the commanders, mainly from the ship's perspective. While these two works have a limited number of characters, Egetsunaiyanke's *Shōwa nihongun* series takes a different approach. The first volume portrays thirty-three historical figures, but only two are affiliated with the Imperial Army. Given this great variety of characters, all figures have their names written next to the panel of their first appearance on every page. All circles provide readers with additional biographical notes on the figures presented to make sure readers know who are they reading about. Even Egetsunaiyanke, with over thirty figures to present, added several pages dedicated to character biographies, with a portrait showing how they look in the *dōjinshi*, the reading of their name's *kanji* characters, military rank, and brief biographical introduction.<sup>xxiv</sup>

All three circles, therefore, focus mainly on Imperial Navy officers who are not implicated in controversies relating to their personal responsibility for war crimes.

Nekosaji and mamezawa portray obscure characters from Japanese history, but this means as individuals they are free from negative associations. *Shōwa nihongun* covers a wider spectrum of figures, including more famous and more controversial ones like admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, admiral Ōnishi Takijirō (creator of the special attack (kamikaze) units), or vice-admiral Daigo Tadashige (sentenced to death as a war criminal by the Dutch military tribunal). As discussed in more detail later, the way the characters and events are presented in *Shōwa nihongun* differs clearly from the two other works. The manga reinterprets facts from the historical figure's lives more freely, and evokes different emotions among readers. Even so, the war-themed *dōjinshi* available during Comiket, as well as those that can be found in online shops, avoid presenting the most controversial personas directly associated with Japanese war responsibility.

Moreover, the creators do not rely on readers' knowledge or the manga narrative to present historical figures, and include additional historical information. The information may be so crucial that if it is not read the narrative presented in the *dōjinshi* itself will be hard to follow. In *Hiei to kanchō*, brief historical information is added in text boxes in the manga itself, while the two other works give extensive information on dedicated pages. *Yuki ni hana* has a note concerning the lives of both characters, although the author says it may not necessarily be correct (because it is based on her personal research), so it says more about the manga than actual history. The most extensive data is presented in *Shōwa nihongun*. This *dōjinshi* is not only entertainment, but also a source of basic knowledge. Next to the biographies of the characters appearing in the manga, there are separate notes dedicated to the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy, battleship *Yamato*, and a war timeline giving some major events in more detail. The reader does not need to look elsewhere for the information needed to understand the story, but without considerable knowledge of war history, readers need to read the additional information to enjoy fully the manga.

For more invested readers, circles provide resource lists, including books, documentaries, websites and movies used as references during creation of the *dōjinshi*. In the case of *Egetsunaiyanke*, there is a map of Japan with the museums and memorials the author visited for research purposes and recommends to the readers. Giving readers suggestions for further reading places war-themed *dōjinshi* closer to a visual research paper than mainstream manga. By contrast, as Otmazgin (2016, p. 10) notes, the

authors of mainstream manga 'to some extent research their subject matter and search for documents and other forms of evidence, but they don't usually cite them and they tend to use these materials more creatively'. References in *dōjinshi* also show which sources are used by creators, and thereby indicate the ideological angles of sources.

The question remains, however, how historically accurate the *dōjinshi* is and how much of the story is the artist's creativity. None of the circles tried to rewrite history significantly, but the historical context tended to be a backdrop for relationships between the characters. In *Yuki ni hana* the reader learns that after participating in the combat around the Mariana Islands (1944) the carrier *Zuikaku* was sunk when used as a decoy during the battle of Cape Engaño, with its commander Kaizuka on the deck. These events are only briefly mentioned in the background of the story and are used to build up the ultimately nostalgic, dream-like atmosphere. The main plot revolves around the bonds between Kaizuka and Takai. The climax is a symbolic moment when Kaizuka asks Takai to light his last cigarette as they are about to separate, shortly before *Zuikaku* sinks. Consequently, even though war history is crucial for the story, it remains the setting rather than the narrative core.

Similarly, in *Hiei to kanchō* historical events are only the background for cheerful episodes of everyday life on (or to be precise, the life of) the battleship *Hiei*. The *dōjinshi* covers the period from 1911 to 1942, from the building of *Hiei* to its sinking at the battle of Guadalcanal, but the historical details relate to the history of *Hiei* and do not draw a broad picture of the war. Some details are part of well-known historical events, but unless readers can put the pieces of the puzzle together on their own, they will not see the bigger picture. In *Hiei to kanchō*, therefore, readers can learn details about the battleship, like the fact that it was built as a battle cruiser; decommissioned and converted to a training ship after the signing of the London Naval Treaty, or that it served as a transport ship for Emperor Hirohito. But, the main focus, as suggested by the title, is the commanders' characters. The depiction of Navy vessels is detailed and realistic, giving the reader a good impression of how the battleships looked, even though the manga-style human characters do not clearly resemble the historical figures. This *dōjinshi* mixes fictional anecdotes of bonding between the personified vessel and his captains, like when admiral Inoue makes a small guitar for the boy, with historical facts that despite being correct are limited in their perspective and omit both the broader war context and depictions of the enemy.

*Shōwa nihongun* has the broadest range of historical information. This manga tells short war-related episodes in various forms from four panels to one-page mini-stories. Historical figures and events are presented in a humorous, parodical manner. The author picks an event and uses the relationships between personas or factions (like the antagonism between the army and navy) to build a comical caricature stripped of pathos or sentiment, but showing human nature in a direct way. No strip is fully fictional and no fictional characters are introduced, but many include comical fiction, including elements from the post-war era, such as volunteer special attack pilots performing rap songs, an officer being a fan of Anita Alvarado (a Chilean-born actress and singer living and performing in Japan, born in 1972), or a person worried about not throwing away burnable garbage on the designated day. Absurd humor makes it relatively easy for the reader to distinguish between fact and fiction. Egetsunaiyanke's works, despite the amount of comical fiction depicted, contains much historical detail. Many of them present Navy officers' biographies, including their family lives, places and vessels on which they served, some strategic decisions they made (for example Kuroshima Kameto's role in the creation of kamikaze, and Daigo Tadashige role in *kaiten* special attack units). Some of the episodes presented are written in the context of major scale historical events, like the battles of Midway, Leyte, and Iwo Jima, or the sinking of the battleship *Yamato*. While *Shōwa nihongun* has numerous historical and biographical details, it does not aim for an accurate visual recreation of aircraft or vessels and leaves them more as brief sketches with priority given to the accuracy of events instead of visuals.

Similarly to *Hiei to kanchō*, where American vessels are directly named only twice, but not shown (Fig. 2), in *Shōwa nihongun* the strips showing combat do not present enemy vessels, except for one panel in which American aircraft are shown for comical effect. Americans appear only later, in two strips presenting the postwar situation after Japan's defeat. This 'phantom foe', as John W. Dower called it (1993, p. 42), is not a unique feature of *dōjinshi*. Dower's (1993, p. 39) analysis of Japanese cinematic portrayals of the enemy is also accurate for the amateur manga discussed in this chapter:

Combat footage, however, plays but a small part in the total oeuvre of Japanese war films. And, indeed, so does the enemy. Many Japanese war films have no

explicit enemies at all; the focus remains almost exclusively on the pure self. Others portray enemies only abstractly, in the form of a distant plane, a running fire, the chatter of a machine gun or boom of field artillery.

The Japanese, who are presented in a generally positive way, are not juxtaposed against a visualized enemy, and no hatred towards the foe is expressed. Characters engage in combat, but against a vague force. They present positive values on their own, without being positioned against any 'villains'.



Figure 2 Mamezawa's *Hiei to kanchō* (2015). Hiei attacking an American vessel.

The *dōjinshi* discussed have presented different amounts of historical detail to the reader, including biographical details of navy officers and faithful visual representation of vessels. Even so, these well-researched and detailed narratives remain narrow, exist in a contextual vacuum, and omit the bigger picture of the conflict and the existence of the (human) enemy.

### **War-themed *dōjinshi* as a product of database consumption**

Both mainstream and amateur manga are influenced by current fashions, the authors' knowledge, experience, and preferences, and also other works consumed by creators. Although *dōjinshi* are limited only by the circle's creative ability, they are also the product of postmodern culture, as argued by Azuma (2009, p. 82), where 'derivative works are works presented as simulacra, which are created as a combination of arbitrarily chosen fragments in the database extracted from the settings of the original'. However, war-themed *dōjinshi* are more than the derivative works discussed by Azuma because the databases circles use consist of elements of pop cultural works, historical information and personal stories. I have identified five tropes, namely nostalgia, homoerotic relationships, *kandō*-narratives, anthropomorphism, and military comedy, and will analyze the use of these tropes in the creation of *dōjinshi*. Even the 'original' *dōjinshi* therefore can be seen as derivative work utilizing forms and narratives seen in mainstream culture.

One of the most characteristic tropes within war-themed productions (especially conservative stories) is nostalgia for the past. Nostalgia pervades *Yuki ni hana* in an old man's bittersweet memories of his youth and the special bond of respect and closeness he shared with his commander. This *dōjinshi*'s author, nekosaji (female, 32, drawing manga for 12 years), said that she had been fascinated with the fate of the aircraft carrier *Zuikaku* ever since she read a book about it in primary school. The storyline of her work and the bonds between the characters, however, were inspired by her grandfather's war stories. 'My grandpa was in the army, but he used to talk about his commanders and friends from the unit often. He lived for decades embracing his memories of a bygone era and people he could never meet again. I think he was constantly drowning in these things' (nekosaji 2017). The author tried to project her

grandfather's emotions of nostalgia onto navy lieutenant Takai and vice-admiral Kaizuka after watching the documentary NHK Testimony Archives (NHK *Shōgen Aakaibu*), in which the real Takai talked about his commander. Consequently, the combination of personal family experience and the lives of better-known historical figures is situated within nostalgic war narratives. Recollected memories are colored by temporal and spatial distance, resulting in idealization of the past. Longing for an idealized past has been a constant element of war representation in Japanese popular culture, ever since the 'nostalgia films' boom in the 1950s (Seaton 2007, p. 44), and is still visible in the kamikaze-themed blockbusters of the 2000s. Sentimental and ultimately positive images of Takai's and Kaizuka's youthful friendship recollected seventy years later by a lonely old man let the reader feel longing for the lost (good) past, in a manner visible in many mainstream cultural works.

While reading *Yuki ni hana* it is hard to ignore the romantic undertones of Takai and Kaizuka's relationship. Notions of comradeship and brotherhood are important elements of army representation, especially in conservative productions. As Standish (2006, p. 202) argued in relation to 1950s kamikaze movies, they were 'displacing the wider discourses of war responsibility through the depiction of the youthful 'tragic heroes' (...) through the homosocial subtext, a reassertion of the primacy of the male group'. Strong emotional bonds and close friendship are to be expected in war-themed productions, but *Yuki ni hana* subtly, yet clearly, suggests a homoerotic relationship between the two main protagonists. The romantic idea of seeing each other in dreams is strengthened by panels showing the protagonists looking into each others' eyes, physical closeness, close-ups of hands touching, or falling asleep together (Fig. 3).



Figure 3 Nekosaji's *Yuki ni hana wo omoite* (2016). Kaizuka and Sakai falling asleep together.

This aspect of Takai and Kaizuka's relationship was not based on historical sources or Takai's testimony, and it is highly doubtful the relationship was suggested in the stories of the author's grandfather. However, homoerotic relationships are popular themes among *dōjin* circles in general. Known as *yaoi* or BL (boy's love), fan works presenting male—male romantic relationships are created mainly by women for women. BL *dōjinshi* are based on many original sources, including other manga, popular American movies and TV shows, games and historical narratives. The bonds between army members are an ideal inspiration for *dōjinshi* creators because '[e]xtrapolating from this concept of male friendship, the ideal romantic love in BL is a clean and honest relationship of mutual caring, in contrast to the "corrupt" relationship that starts from romantic or erotic motivations' (Saito 2011, p. 183). Military relationships are a good base for the notion of 'pure', ideal love rooted in manly friendship, and have been used by *dōjin* circles creating historical works.

While the homoeroticism is subtle in *Yuki ni hana*, two other circles have presented more explicit content. BL elements are visible in the Nazi-themed works of Otto Ohlendorf, and both the Nazi- and Imperial Navy-themed chapters of Akitsuki's

manga. During Comiket 90 the circle of Ōtake Naoko presented a volume of stories of Imperial Army and Navy veterans talking about homosexual relationships in the army. They were originally published in the 1950s in *kasutori* magazines (cheap pornographic publications popular in the postwar period) and completed with the addition of illustrations by the circle. Noppe (2014, p. 28) notes that '[y]aoi in Japan mostly originated in *dōjinshi* in the 1980s (...), and remains an extremely popular genre especially among female *dōjinshi* creators and buyers'. Considering that females have always constituted over half of the circles participating in Comiket, the position of BL in the *dōjinshi* market is strong. Consequently, BL tropes exist in war-themed *dōjinshi*, even though no historical materials would suggest such relationships.

Emotionality is a feature strongly desired by many consumers, not only of *dōjinshi*, but popular culture in general. Consumers' reactions towards an affective narrative are termed *kandō* in Japanese, which means feeling deeply moved or personally touched, as discussed in Chapter 2. War stories, particularly those which are conservative in tone, are often mentioned as '*kandō* narratives'. The self-sacrifice of young, loving, dedicated heroes who give up their lives for their beloved family and *furusato* (hometown) rather than the nation-state gives consumers the ultimate reason to feel moved. Scholars have named several popular tropes present in Japanese pop culture, like 'aestheticiz[ation] of sacrifice and honor without specifically addressing the political implications of the war or crimes and atrocities committed' (Takenaka 2016), and the 'image (...) of the Japanese as an innocent, suffering, self-sacrificing people' Dower (1993, p. 51). Vividly present especially in cinema, these tropes belong to the elements evoking *kandō* desired by consumers, and can be found also in *dōjinshi*. The story presented in *Yuki ni hana*, with its sad, nostalgic overtone, moves many readers, but it is *Hiei to kanchō* that in its finale uses the most recognizable and representative '*kandō* tools'.

After a series of cute, humorous strips, the story reaches the point when the ship sank. The events are shown in two strips, 'Third Battle of the Solomon Sea'<sup>xxv</sup> and 'Last moments of Hiei'. The first covers *Hiei* taking damage in combat, the crew's evacuation, and captain Nishida's reluctance to leave the ship when the order to scuttle is given. Hurt and abandoned, the lonely boy accepts the bitterness of being left alone to die. He gives a big smile and salutes one last time to his captain: 'Make sure you survive! Please

survive and fight for the country for me! I believe that you will avenge me, boss...’ (Fig. 4).



Figure 4 Mamezawa's *Hiei to kanchō* (2015). Hiei's death.

Although Hiei wanted to be saved, he eventually accepted his upcoming death in the hope of victory. The sacrifice of a cheerful, innocent character is a rather clichéd *kandō*-evoking measure. As these scenes do not include any explanation about how Hiei ended up near Guadalcanal Island and why he was being attacked, the reader can focus on the emotional reaction, without too much consideration for the historical background. The effect is even strengthened by one last strip in the volume, which presents another touching scene of captain Nishida's (presumably posthumous) reunion with Hiei. The old man is exculpated for abandoning his ship when Hiei tells him to stop suffering and embraces him. The *dōjinshi* emotively presents Hiei's history as an interpersonal relationship and places it firmly into the 'narrative trope of the tragic hero who sacrifices his life for a greater cause and the aestheticisation of such actions, [that]

are common in Japanese literature, cinema and popular culture' (Sakamoto 2015, p. 167).

This touching representation of the personified vessel's 'death' is not an idea first introduced by *mamezawa*. The trend of personification (*gijinka*) is rooted in the idea of *moe*, as discussed in Chapter 2. Consumers experience *moe* towards *kawaii* (cute) characters (*kyara*) that are simultaneously young, pure and sexy, in what constitutes a 'conflation of child-like innocence and adult desire' (Galbraith 2009). Miyake (2016, pp. 161-162) notes that this combination 'builds on the stimulation of polymorphic-idealized feelings of protectiveness towards cute characters, presented as infantilized and helpless, combined with attraction towards eroticized girls' (in the case of male fans) and 'eroticized boys' in the case of female fans. As a result of the growing popularity of *moe* elements rooted in *dōjin* culture, anthropomorphic *kyara* with *moe* features started being used by mainstream publishers. These trends of personification extend to war-related elements, too.

The work that introduced the idea of anthropomorphism of nations was *Axis Powers Hetalia*, which started as a web comic created by Himaruya Hidekazu in 2006. During Comiket 77 (Winter 2009) the number of *Hetalia dōjinshi* was so big, that the fandom earned its own category, which was still in existence in 2016 (Comiket 91 2016). The web comic told short anecdotes about relations between the Axis Powers and Allied countries personified as cute boys. It presented various stereotypes about the countries, but grew into a mixed media franchise and was also popular outside of Japan. *Hetalia's* great popularity was followed by the huge success of *KanColle*. Although *KanColle* is the most commercially successful, it is not the only title presenting anthropomorphic vessels from World War II. Manga like *Nippon teikoku kijinka kaigun shinyatai* (Japanese Imperial Midnight Navy) or *Nihon kaigun kikka rengō kantai* (Chrysanthemum Combined Fleet of Japanese Navy) are both based on the same idea, although they only present military vehicles as male characters. War-themed *gijinka*, therefore, is not an isolated phenomenon, but a visible trend both in mainstream and *dōjin* culture.

What the 'moefication' (Miyake 2016, p. 162) of warfare achieves is the evocation of the reader's attachment to a far greater degree than would have been possible just by presenting historical events using inanimate objects. On the one hand it allows much more creativity in design and storyline than using historical figures as characters; on the other hand it gives the artist a firm set of data as a framework that would be absent if

fully fictional characters were introduced. When asked about her inspirations for the portrayal of *Hiei*, mamezawa admitted that she wanted to be at least partially original when she chose to draw the ship as a boy, using a cute ‘deformed’ design, because drawing *Hiei* as a girl would make her work seem to be an imitation of *KanColle*, and drawing a handsome adult (*bishōnen*) would be an imitation of *Nihon kaigun kikka rengō kantai*. Mamezawa used human behavior to emphasize the changes *Hiei* went through when he was turned into a battleship from a battle cruiser:

To express that from its construction until disarmament *Hiei* didn’t demonstrate particular military power, and after that as a result of bad luck was excluded from the fleet, I presented *Hiei* before he became the training vessel as a good, quiet kid. As he was the only one of the four *Kongō*-class battle cruisers that got disarmed and turned into the training vessel, I had the idea that he would be sulky because he was separated from his friends. Therefore, when he was reconstructed his character changed, and he became more aggressive and stubborn’ (mamezawa 2017).

By using anthropomorphism, the creator gets a chance to make the reader actually like and care for the vessel and to make it aesthetically pleasant through its *kawaii* form. Despite using vessel personification, however, mamezawa sees herself as representative of historical *dōjinshi*, because she pays great attention to historical details, whereas most *gijinka* works use only brief motifs, and give little priority to factual accuracy.

Both mamezawa and nekosaji believe that the popularization of *gijinka* works using war as one of their motifs is a good thing. Still, according to mamezawa, many works of this type, like *dōjinshi* derived from *KanColle*, present historical personas and events either inaccurately or disrespectfully (mamezawa 2017). Also, consumers of historical and *gijinka dōjinshi* seem to be separate groups looking for different content. The increase in *gijinka* popularity, therefore, did not noticeably increase the sales of historical *dōjinshi*. There are, however, individuals who after becoming interested in *gijinka* works move towards historical *dōjinshi* and manga (nekosaji 2017). The connection between *gijinka*-type works and war-themed historical works cannot be dismissed completely.

The humor in the *dōjinshi* discussed thus far connects it to the broader genre of military comedy. There is comedy in several strips of *Hiei to kanchō* and Akitsuki's works depicting both Nazi and Imperial Japan officers, but humor is most striking in *Shōwa nihongun*. McLoughlin (2011, p. 165) noted that traditionally '[c]onflict is a matter of deadly seriousness, a fact which has prompted representation in the same vein: plainspoken realism; somberness of tone; conservatism of style and structure – all these adding up to a decorum of war writing.' Humor often seems to be an 'unsuitable' form for the topic of war, as Barber (2016) noted when discussing war comedy phenomenon: 'few things in life are less funny than war. Mass slaughter and widespread destruction are no laughing matter (...). Isn't it walking through a minefield, so to speak, to try to get laughs from such a potentially upsetting topic?' Around the world, comical portrayals of World War II may not be particularly common, but it is a recognized genre. *Dr. Strangelove or: How I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb* (USA, 1964), *How I won the War* (Great Britain, 1967), *How I unleashed World War II* (Poland, 1969), and the British sitcoms *'Allo 'Allo!* (1982-1992) and *Dad's army* (1968-1977) are internationally known classics, to name only a few. Comedy in a wartime setting emphasizes the everyday struggle of ordinary people (both conscripted and civilians) who found themselves living in difficult circumstances, and give audiences a sense of continuity by showing that even during war people still have small weaknesses and everyday lives. Black humor, moreover, is emphasized as a coping strategy when dealing with the terror of war.

Japanese mainstream popular culture tends to eschew humor in representations of war. Even if there are some comical episodes, for example as in Nakazawa's *Hadashi no Gen* or Tezuka's war-themed manga (Tezuka 2010), purely humorous representations are rare. Typically, popular works depicting war focus on heroism and sacrifice, often in a relatively serious manner, evoking *kandō*. Absurd and dark humor are features of military comedy, and Egetsunaiyanke's *dōjinshi* can be seen almost as a representative implementation of incongruity theory, in which the consumer's laughter results from the realization of the incongruity between the concept and its realization (cf. Morreall 1983, Lippit 1994).

Episodes presented in *Shōwa nihongun* start off in a manner similar to the usual mainstream representations, with realistic drawings and historical figures behaving as the reader would expect: having serious conversations concerning mostly war strategies

or their personal situation, and performing their duties. However, rather than continuing in the same serious manner, the author confronts the reader with a sudden, unexpected twist. The characters start to behave and interact in a way far from the dignified manner familiar in popular representations, therefore achieving a comical effect. Simultaneously the realistic drawing style becomes deformed and caricatured. In *Shōwa nihongun*, Aruga Kōsaku panics when nominated to command the battleship *Yamato*, instead of calmly accepting the honor as he would do in a more typical representation. Rear admiral Yanagimoto Ryūsaku, who went down with the aircraft carrier *Sōryū*, is not shown as dying with dignity, but desperately and unsuccessfully trying to leave the ship after changing his mind. These narrative twists present in every episode of *Shōwa nihongun* generate a humorous effect, lacking in the pathos they tend to be infused with, especially in conservative representations. In the *dōjinshi*, willing sacrifice for the homeland and loved ones are replaced with strongly, comically exaggerated feelings of fear for one's own life, sexual attraction, or interpersonal animosities. This humorous (perhaps cynical) representation breaks with the traditions of both the heroic and tragic narratives of army members, and shows people as guided mainly by down-to-earth pragmatism rather than a belief in any higher values. In this way, Egetsunaiyanke's *dōjinshi* differs markedly from popular mainstream war-themed manga, and deserves placement in the genre of military comedy. It seems that the comedy is welcomed by readers, because Egetsunaiyanke is established as a circle. Her works are well-known among war-genre *dōjinshi* lovers, and she inspires the works of other creators. Nekosaji (2017) stated that although she was interested in the carrier *Zuikaku* since childhood, she first learned about vice-admiral Kaizuka from one of the *Shōwa nihongun* series. She calls them 'military classics', despite their parodical form.

*Dōjinshi*, therefore, are original independent works which escape from some of the limitations applying to commercial manga, but at the same time they are not created in a vacuum. The tropes discussed reflect either trends in mainstream pop cultural war representations, like nostalgia and *kandō*, or characteristic trends in *dōjin* culture, like 'moefication' and anthropomorphisation, fascination with male—male romantic relationships and humorous parodies. Fan comics reuse and remix recognizable tropes, while simultaneously telling new stories to the reader and providing them occasionally with new historical information.

## **Ideological angles presented in *dōjinshi***

Otmazgin (2016, p. 2) has analyzed the opinion-shaping role of mainstream manga as follows:

[M]any conscious attempts have been made recently by manga publishers and by mangaka (manga artists) themselves to use this popular medium to convey political messages that are not represented in the mainstream media. (...) For this purpose, manga is viewed by both publishers and certain mangaka as a legitimate political tool for changing popular attitude toward the past and influencing readers' political opinions in the present.

As discussed earlier, ideological positions are visible to various degrees in war-themed mainstream manga, covering the spectrum from progressive to nationalistic. The general balance of the mainstream manga market with the predominance of progressive-leaning titles in numbers and sales (as noted by Penney and Wakefield 2008) constitutes an important context for understanding war-themed *dōjinshi*. Compared to mainstream manga, the numbers of military *dōjinshi* are small, but they still have certain characteristics. Fan comics are rooted in a deep fascination with the military, particularly the navy, and they present predominantly conservative narratives. Circles do not use argumentative rhetoric aimed at convincing the reader of a certain worldview (as nationalistic mangaka do), but most usually present a positive image of the Imperial Navy, while cutting out the historical context despite often precise portrayal of historical details. In the homage they pay to (particularly naval) war stories, they lack the anti-war message that can be found in many popular mainstream works, including the conservative ones.

All Japanese historical figures presented in war-themed *dōjinshi* are likeable and portrayed in a positive light, even if not necessarily as heroic role models. They perform their duties with a smile, engage in friendly interpersonal relationships, make jokes, have hobbies, and get tired and scared sometimes. Readers can relate to such characters. The positive images are not juxtaposed with any duties or activities that

could negatively influence their images, and even the attacks carried out by the Japanese Empire are presented as simply occurring against the invisible enemy. Depictions resemble the narratives in textbooks, about which Carol Gluck (1993, p. 83) has written: 'the war was often narrated in just such a fashion, as if events "were caused" without the intervention of human agency.' The best example of this artistic technique, where characters float passively on the waters of decontextualized history, are probably the sections of *Hiei to kanchō* presenting the Pearl Harbor attack. First, the section entitled *Hokkaidō/Hitokappu nite* (Through Hokkaido and Kasatka Bay) shows Hiei freezing in the cold waters of northeast Japan, and then in *Kurasuheddo okorareru* (Head of the class is angry), Hiei is presented trying to attack an American destroyer under the supervision of vice-admiral Nagumo. To the less informed reader, these are random episodes, but some more historical knowledge allows readers to connect the dots. Hiei passed by Kasatka Bay on its way to Hawaii as part of the escort for the carriers under the command of vice-admiral Nagumo that attacked Pearl Harbor. However, the *dōjinshi* presents episodes in such a fragmentary way that the bigger context of the Japanese attack on the United States can be easily missed. This narrative technique is used by all three circles. They place their characters in a given situation without too much explanation of the political decisions and events that led to them. Consequently, no questions of responsibility and aggression are raised. Limited contextualization is a technique broadly used in conservative war narratives, as it can be seen in the example of the Chiran Peace Museum about the kamikaze, in which the exhibits are presented in a decontextualized form quite similar to *dōjinshi* narratives:

The acts of violence themselves are largely overlooked; rather the narrative takes a sympathetic view of the actors as individuals, removed from the context of why there was war. It focuses on their humanity and their individuality, their challenges, their fears, their vulnerabilities and most of all their youth. (Allen and Sakamoto 2013, p. 1049)

Such decontextualization and individualization of the narrative lets authors tell positive stories about difficult times and is even more striking in the case of *dōjinshi* because the characters portrayed are not anonymous soldiers or seamen, but officers who actively influenced war events on a higher level. Uncritically positive images of historical figures

resulting from limited contextualization places *dōjinshi* closer to the conservative end of ideological spectrum.

While the enemy is generally invisible, in the brief scenes when the enemy does appear it is only an American one. There is little reference to the Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945). In the popular narrative '[t]he war in China appeared rather as prologue to the main tragedy, which was the war from Pearl Harbor to the atomic bomb' even though '[f]or years progressive historians wrote insistently of the "Fifteen Year War", precisely to make the point that for Japan, World War II did not begin at Pearl Harbor' (Gluck 1993, p. 83). *Dōjinshi* generally fit into this focus on Pacific war, that seems also to result naturally from the focus on navy and major naval battles.

Some references are made to the pre-Pearl Harbor period, but there are not many indications of military conflict there. In *Steppin' out!*, another of the *dōjinshi* by Akitsuki, the destroyer *Kisaragi* is moving up the Yangtze river in 1937 as part of an undefined military operation. After landing, the crew wants to give gifts of salt to locals, but get approached instead by the enthusiastic Japanese army. The atmosphere of the story is joyful and no explanation is given about the reasons for the Japanese military forces being in China. There is also a reference to Manchukuo in *Hiei to kanchō*, in the strips presenting Manchukuo emperor's Puyi visit to Japan in 1935, because *Hiei* was the battleship used to transport the Emperor. The strip presents *Hiei's* crewmembers coming in panic to captain Inoue because the Chinese guests accompanying the emperor are behaving in a rude manner and doing as they please despite being reprimanded. The captain orders the disobedient guests to leave the ship immediately, as no-one is allowed to disgrace his *Hiei* (Fig. 5).

艦長怒る



Figure 5 Mamezawa's *Hiei to kanchō* (2015). Captain Inoue ordering Manchurian guests to leave the ship.

The episode leaves the impression of the Manchurian visitors being bad-mannered, but again, no military conflict is mentioned.

These elements are consistent with the features of mainstream conservative narratives, and demonstrate that *dōjinshi* lack the ideological range of commercially published manga. Egetsunaiyanke's numerous works, however, present an interesting variation on the conservative narrative. War stories told by the circle generally have conservative characteristics, and all additional explanations given by the author only confirm her strong fascination with the Imperial Navy. Among the memory sites she recommends visiting to learn more about the navy are Yūshūkan (Yasukuni Shrine's museum) and Shōwakan, which is near Yasukuni Shrine and run by the War Bereaved Association (*Izokukai*). Both are known for their conservative exhibitions (cf. Seaton 2007, Allen and Sakamoto 2013). Egetsunaiyanke's works, however, starting with *Shōwa nihongun*, present conservative narratives with an ironical distance rare in mainstream manga. The humor encourages skepticism towards wartime (or any other) ideology and removes the pathos and emotionality resulting in readers' *kandō* that exists in so many conservative works. It is doubtful that Egetsunaiyanke's manga could move readers to tears, but making them laugh also creates opportunities to reinforce conservative narratives.

In one strip vice admiral Tadashige, who was involved in the *kaiten* suicide mini-submarine program, decides to teach the pilots the joy of youth before their premature deaths, so they dedicate part of the day to singing rap songs about their lives being wasted because of the war, dressing up in fancy clothes, and watching family dramas. As a result, the *kaiten* cadets do not have time for proper training and many die without reaching the enemy's vessels. So, other cadets start asking admiral Ōnishi to accept them as kamikaze and let them die beautifully and successfully (*migoto ni*). Egetsunaiyanke presents ironic and cynical images rather than the clichéd, romanticized image of special attack pilots as volunteers sacrificing their lives for the country. Considering the circle's established position among other creators of war-themed works, with more than ten volumes published over the years and close to 4,000 followers on Twitter, it seems that this narrative style is appreciated by many fans of the genre.

Kitada (2005) has analysed the 'cynical nationalism' of *2-channeru* (2-channel) users. *2-channeru* is an unmoderated Internet forum in which strongly conservative

voices proliferate and sarcasm and irony are commonly used. Users exhibit a 'paranoid attitude that aggressively seeks discrepancies between form and content' (Kitada 2012, p. 80). They remain deeply suspicious and critical of mainstream media, and are 'idealists who construct a romantic self-image as whistle-blowers of hidden realities, and not as realists who make brutally honest statements' (Kitada 2012, p. 81). Egetsunaiyanke's war-themed *dōjinshi* are, in a way, one realization of such 'cynical nationalist' rhetoric. Despite the comical distance and ironic mocking of pompous mainstream representations, the circle still exhibits faith in the strength and dedication of the Japanese Imperial Navy. Understanding officers' human nature via humor is not disrespectful, but empathetic. This 'cynically romantic' view of reality is lacking in mainstream conservative narratives, but, as pointed out by Kitada, is welcomed by young conservatives and nationalists.

## Conclusions

Asia-Pacific War-themed *dōjinshi*, particularly in manga format, are marginal in the context of the whole market for fan-produced works. Nevertheless, they are an important genre with a considerable fan base. These amateur comic books can be seen as an inheritance of the *jibunshi* tradition. They are examples of individualized amateur historiography, present historical events through individuals' (particularly Navy officers') lives, focus on biographical details, and tell history as simply 'happening' in the background.

The narratives are supplemented with historical information and accompanied by reference lists which show the circles' extensive research. This suggests to readers that *dōjinshi* present relatively faithful historical accounts. The narratives, however, are fragmentary, and show events without the major context or a coherent historical narrative. They are created by people interested often in one particular issue or figure, and so they reflect the particular interests of their creators. In addition to the historical interests of authors, *dōjinshi* reveal the pop cultural conventions or genres that have influenced the works. Moefication, boys' love (BL), *kandō*, nostalgia and irony are devices in mainstream works, but some *dōjinshi* mix them with war narratives in ways rarely found in commercial manga representations of the war. Considering that these

works can be placed closer to conservative end of ideological memory spectrum, the combination of homoerotic narratives and ironical humor with war issues generates a characteristic category of pop cultural war representations.

Although not numerous, these works find keen consumers. Readers interested in historical fiction treat it like a ‘feel good story’ with positive historical characters (nekosaji 2017), and reading *dōjinshi* lets fans deepen their interest and knowledge in history, or it is simply entertaining fun (mamezawa 2017). In various ways, therefore, *dōjinshi* are an important genre contributing original voices in multiple ways to the formation of Japanese war memories.

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<sup>iii</sup> Usually circles do not state how many members they have and call themselves simply a circle. I use therefore the word ‘circle’ to refer to both individuals and groups.

<sup>iv</sup> Accusations of photograph falsification aiming at undermining the material credibility, and consequently the whole narrative. Nationalist historian Fujioka Nobukatsu, for example, casted doubts about the credibility of photographs documenting Japanese war crimes in China (cf. Morris-Suzuki 2005, pp. 72-78)

<sup>v</sup> Comic Market official website, event history:

<http://www.comiket.co.jp/archives/Chronology.html> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>vi</sup> The reasons for *dōjin* activity being widely accepted by the Japanese mainstream manga market were discussed by Noppe 2014, pp. 318-331.

<sup>vii</sup> A game company producing mainly visual novels.

<sup>viii</sup> A video game developer, best known for the *Final Fantasy* game series.

<sup>ix</sup> [www.pixiv.net](http://www.pixiv.net) is a Japanese online community for artists, presenting mostly manga, anime and games fan art, but also creative writing and original works.

<sup>x</sup> Mandarake store official website: <http://www.mandarake.co.jp/> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xi</sup> Surugaya online store website: <http://www.suruga-ya.jp/> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xii</sup> Toranoana online store website: <http://www.toranoana.jp/index.html> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xiii</sup> A popular Chinese historical novel covering the period 220-280. It has been adapted in various media in Japan, including manga, anime and video games.

<sup>xiv</sup> Nakamura Yōtarō’s blog: <http://blog.livedoor.jp/yotalog/> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xv</sup> Website of Yamato Yukihara circle: <http://yamato-yukihara.web.fc2.com/top.html> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

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<sup>xvi</sup> Website of Ōtake Naoko circle: <http://www.chalema.com/book/sentaro/> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xvii</sup> Website of Ninomaehajime/Otto Ohlendorf circle: <https://ottoohlendorf.booth.pm/> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xviii</sup> Website of Akitsuki circle: [http://www1.u-netsurf.ne.jp/~AF1ksaki/Gun/Index\\_1.html](http://www1.u-netsurf.ne.jp/~AF1ksaki/Gun/Index_1.html) [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xix</sup> Twitter account of nekosaji circle: <https://twitter.com/nekocolher> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xx</sup> Website of mamezawa circle: <http://hacobune.web.fc2.com/> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xxi</sup> Website of Egetsunayanke circle: <http://www.k4.dion.ne.jp/~ymj/egetsunaiyanke/> [Accessed 16 July 2017].

<sup>xxii</sup> The comic book gained enough popularity to be published commercially in 2012, and Ozawa started a career as a professional mangaka, publishing various workings including another war-themed series *Atokata no machi* (City of traces).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Short stories about homosexual relationships published by Ōtake Naoko, Siberian internees memories, short stories and light novels by Yamato Yukihara

<sup>xxiv</sup> Egetsunaiyanke even created a separate volume *Jinbutsuroku* (Records of personas), dedicating each page to a different historical figure, with information about them and a short comic presenting event from their lives. It was effectively a manga-style mini-encyclopedia of wartime army and navy officers.

<sup>xxv</sup> Known in English sources as the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal

## Chapter 4

### War memories in Japanese popular and fan music

In contrast to the relatively large literature discussing representations of the war in manga, as discussed in Chapter 3, a medium that receives relatively little attention is popular music. In the postwar period Japanese artists have created many songs touching upon the issues of the Asia-Pacific War, including kamikaze-praising ballads, *enka*<sup>xxvi</sup> about Hiroshima suffering, and anti-nuclear protest songs. Varying in form and content, they are a part of Japanese cultural war memory that remains relatively under-researched.

Nevertheless, war-related music has featured in the academic literature. Two studies have discussed Ikebe Shinichiro's choral work *Akuma no hōshoku* ('The devil's gluttony', with words by Morimura Seiichi, based on his book of the same title about biological warfare Unit 731), which was performed in various cities by local amateur choirs who wanted to do something for peace (Seraphim 2006, pp. 288-295; Seaton 2014). Another work that gained public attention was *Symphony number 1 'Hiroshima'* by Samuragochi Mamoru, dedicated to the victims of the A-bomb. In 2014, the composer was revealed to be a fraud and his compositions were ghostwritten, but for several years the symphony was acclaimed as a popular tribute to war victims. John Dower (1999) included some popular songs from the early post-war period in his seminal study of occupation period Japan. While not explicitly analyzing war-related content, there were passages concerning how sentimental children songs were given parody lyrics to reflect the black market reality (1999, pp. 170-171), the popularity of the theme song of *Bells of Nagasaki* (1999, p. 198), and the expression of nationalism and nostalgia in a 1952 song written by two war criminals sentenced to death in Monton Lupa prison (1999, pp. 514-515). Collectively, these sections present a view of how music referred to war in the context of the post-war situation and general sentiments present in Japanese society. Tanaka (2008) discussed the songs recorded in 2005 for Yasukuni Shrine's contest commemorating 'the end of the Great East Asian War', which touched upon the bravery and sacrifice of wartime generation, and their role in promoting nationalism. And Roberson (2009, 2010) focused on another aspect of war memories in music: their regionalism as visible in Okinawan music. Analyzing popular songs from the 1930s to

the 2000s, Roberson presented how music was simultaneously a means of Japanese propaganda and the resistance of Okinawan people, and how music became a site conveying local war memories, with a strong local pacifistic context, complicated by the problematic military bases issue on the islands.

A category of compositions not referring directly to war events, but relevant for the discussion here, is ideologically-engaged music. Manabe Noriko (2012, 2013, 2014) has discussed extensively the role of music in political demonstrations, including those against nuclear power plants and those opposing the politics of the contemporary conservative government. From this perspective, music is seen as a tool for attracting participants to street demonstrations. It can also be a means of spreading ideological messages in a simple, amusing form that can be easily repeated by listeners. The music analyzed by Manabe can be close in content to war-themed compositions: for example, anti-nuclear songs can refer to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Furthermore, many are composed non-commercially. However, they do not conform to the definition of fan production. The politically engaged songs discussed by Manabe are created as part of organized political activities, not as a hobby. They accompany events, aim to attract people to take part in those events, and introduce certain ideas to the audience as part of a bigger political project. The fan music that I will discuss in this chapter is created as a means of entertainment and may be categorized as a hobby.

In this chapter I will focus on modern Japanese popular music – primarily pop, rock and hip-hop – in which the lyrics refer explicitly to Asia-Pacific War events. The study is divided into two parts. First I discuss mainstream, commercial music. The primary objective of this part is to present how, similarly to other Japanese pop culture productions, music covers a broad ideological spectrum from nationalist to progressive (based on the ideological spectrum of judgmental memory in Seaton 2007, pp. 20-28). Then I will discuss fan-produced music, and dedicate the latter part of the chapter to amateur compositions, as defined through discussion of the circuit of culture in Chapter 2. The conclusion is that independent ‘fan’ musicians, who are less bound by the rules of the consumer market affecting mainstream stars, send stronger, clearer ideological messages. The songs of well-known, popular artists tend to contain more ideological contradictions, with divergent messages sent even within one song or in different songs created by the same artist. Even if the song’s lyrics contain war references, it is unclear to what extent the message reaches the audience. The song’s musical

(cheerful/melancholy, fast/slow) or rhetorical (metaphors, use of English) characteristics can affect the message of the lyrics. Reading or analyzing lyrics as a poem in isolation from the music can impact the audience in a different way compared to only listening to the music. Some of the songs are accompanied by music videos, in which case visuals can reinforce, weaken or contradict the lyrics' message. Moreover, while mainstream music covers the whole ideological spectrum, songs that can be categorized as fan productions cluster towards the conservative and nationalistic end of the spectrum, including sometimes even hate-speech with strong xenophobic and 'anti-left' sentiment.

Even though I juxtapose mainstream and fan music as separate categories, the lines between them remain fluid. Mainstream music is by no means a monolithic construction. Some artists sell millions of albums, while others never make the Oricon music charts. Songs reach different sizes of audience via different media, and not all songs are easily found on television or radio. But, these artists are all professional musicians making a living out of music. Some fan musicians describe themselves as 'singers' and their activities seem to be part of a professional career, although in reality it is only a side project for them. The boundaries between professional and fan musicians are blurred, therefore, but the categories are clear enough to identify certain tendencies of professional and fan musicians.

### **Covering the ideological spectrum in mainstream music - from right to left**

Many references to Asia-Pacific War events can be found in the compositions of so-called *aikoku* bands, literally patriotic bands. There are several bands, albeit little known by the general public, commenting in their music on Japanese current affairs, often involving historical issues, with a clear right-wing stance. They typically play heavier music genres, like punk, metal, rock or rap/hip-hop. Bands like Miburō, Angercall, Strong Style, Laiya, or R-Shitei<sup>xxvii</sup> tend to use Japanese national symbols during concerts or in their promotion videos and album art. Their compositions praise Japan, take pride in its history, culture and uniqueness, offer gratitude towards people who fought for the country in the past, and call for the restoration of pride and patriotism in a nation seemingly 'brainwashed' by leftists (cf. Fuchs 2016). These songs

can have a xenophobic tone, targeting particularly Koreans and Chinese. Nevertheless, these bands have found themselves a niche in the Japanese music market, release records under commercial labels, and sell their music mainly via Internet stores, in some cases including Amazon. They also play live concerts, often during events with a clear nationalistic angle, attracting a specific audience.

An *aikoku* band that has found rich inspiration in war history and can be considered relatively successful – in that it has signed a recording contract, has released two albums and professionally shot music video – is AreiRaise. It is a male hip-hop group created in 2005 to participate in a musical contest organized by Yasukuni Shrine (Tanaka 2008). The name of the band was chosen carefully. The first two characters, *eirei*, mean ‘spirits of the war dead’, while the next two, *raise*, mean ‘future world’. The meaning of the band's name is explained as ‘the wishes of the war dead are passed onto the world of tomorrow’ (Hosokawa 2007). The official spelling used by the band is Romanized, ‘AreiRaise’, while the reading given in katakana reflects English pronunciation. As the band sings only in Japanese, presumably for a Japanese audience, and focuses on values of the ‘Japanese spirit’, using English pronunciation in the band’s name seems to be contradictory. Another irony relates to their musical genre. Tanaka (2008) noted that hip-hop is historically the music of minorities, namely American black and Hispanic youth, so using it to express nationalistic Japanese sentiment places the music very far from its roots. Satō Shunsuke, the founder, lyricist and main vocalist of AreiRaise, commented that there are many things in Japan ‘borrowed’ from abroad, such as food and Chinese characters, which are used in a Japanese manner. He does not feel hip-hop is any different and its origins do not prevent it from being used freely in Japan (Satō 2015).

Compared to other *aikoku* bands, AreiRaise are more widely recognized. Instead of selling recordings mostly at events, their two albums can be purchased countrywide on Amazon, and in 2015 five of their compositions were available in karaoke boxes belonging to Joysound, the company licensed to distribute karaoke versions of AreiRaise songs (AreiRaise 2015). Their homepage and first CD cover state that they are ‘neither right nor left wing, they just love Japan’ (AreiRaise 2010). Their songs and performance venues, however, indicate that their views of history are nationalistic, and the artists express right-wing political engagement.

I will discuss *Kaisen* (The outbreak of war). This song was less popular than AreiRaise's first single *Kyōji* (Pride), about the pride of being Japanese, or *Kudan* (the last message of a kamikaze pilot to his parents, based on a letter publicly available in Yasukuni Shrine), but it presents the band's ideological manifesto.

As Japanese you cannot forget 8 December 1941  
Engrave them, those ordeals  
The anniversary of rising up, strong, proud men (...)  
Take back our pride (outbreak of war) (...)  
Take our history back (outbreak of war) (...)  
Remember Pearl Harbor  
Did you forget these words?  
The world does not belong to white people  
Do not forget the courage and strong spirit  
South America, Africa, then Asia,  
White fangs devouring food (...)  
Representing coloured people,  
The liberation of colonies,  
Destroying fences surrounding the future  
For sure, we're given dreams and hope by the divine wind blowing through the  
Pacific  
Inherited pride and spirit,  
We are the children of heroes<sup>xxviii</sup>

In AreiRaise's song the beginning of war means the attack on Pearl Harbor (the date 8 December is given). But it is not an act of aggression – it is an uprising, 'rising up, strong, proud men' against white colonizers. The band sings in the chorus about the outbreak of their personal war. As children of heroes, they will fight for historical 'truth' concerning war history to recover the respect their ancestors deserve. The message of *Kaisen* is very close to Kobayashi Yoshinori's vision of history: there is a need to restore the national pride of war heroes, and recognize their bravery and contribution to Japan's and Asia's future. As Sakamoto (2008) stated:

Set against a domestic backdrop of strong anti-war sentiments and widespread condemnation of Japan's Pacific War, *Sensōron's* message seems to be that by fighting a discursive/symbolic war over the meaning of the past in order to protect "our granddads", "we" can be heroes again, here and now.'

Although AreiRaise's lyrics do not mention the left wing directly, it can be assumed that left-wing media and groups are the ones who took away their pride in Japanese history through their apologetic attitude. Consequently, there is the need to 'restore pride' now. Extra context is given to the song by the occasions on which it was performed, like right-wing meetings and demonstrations against anti-Japanese media<sup>xxix</sup>. AreiRaise's political engagement and musical fight against an apologetic view of Japanese history means that in spite of their motto, the band can be placed at the far right of the Japanese music scene.

Despite being more broadly noticed after their success in a Yasukuni Shrine song contest and the commercial production of their CDs/videos, AreiRaise are the closest to fan productions of all the commercial bands discussed. The project began as an amateur band created by young Yasukuni enthusiasts, and finished when they decided to pursue other professional careers and family life. Vocalist Satō Shunsuke stated in 2015 that while other band members moved on with their lives, he wants to continue with his musical career. But he distances himself from commentaries on current political affairs and wants to focus more on nostalgic ballads dedicated to fallen soldiers enshrined in Yasukuni, where he also spends most of his time (Satō 2015).

Moving along the scale of judgmental memory, the conservative position is represented by Softball, a punk girls trio from Chiba prefecture that was active between 1998 and 2003 (Softball, n.d.). In 2002 they recorded their highest selling album, *Lamp*, which revolved around the idea of 'war and lost landscapes' (CD Journal, 2002). Its main topic was the legacy of the Asia-Pacific War. If the songs did not speak explicitly about war events, they still touched upon the topics of dealing with difficult memories and the influence of the past on one's life, while the CD booklet included images of the kamikaze. Most songs on the album are sung fully or partially in very difficult-to-understand English, while the melodies are vivid and cheerful. Of the two songs discussing the war most explicitly, *Heavenly* and *Remember the hill*, I will discuss the latter, which is one of Softball's biggest hits.

[Sung in English] I sit on a bench on a hill  
Looking flying dragonflies in the sky at sun set.  
And it reminded me of the shape of zero-fighters,  
Because I saw that on TV yesterday night.  
Do I really understand that war?  
I can feel my self dreary.  
In 1944, our grandfathers  
Flew to the Pacific holding in 500 pond domb [sic].  
And they passed away. (...)  
18 year-old boy gripped a steering in cock-pit.  
They said good-bye forever.  
At the departure risking their lives (...)  
Do I understand a brave spilit [sic] of the same ancestor?  
If I am in their situation,  
Do I have the same courage as his?  
What do I have to think as a Japanese?  
Look back history.

These lyrics, including all the mistakes, are copied directly from the CD notes. Even while following the written text, the speed and vocalist's pronunciation make understanding the song difficult. Fortunately, the CD notes give not only lyrics in English, but also a Japanese translation. There is no explanation of why the songs were performed in English. It could simply be following the fashion for using English, although praising Japanese soldiers in a foreign language (especially English) is an irony which seems to remain unnoticed<sup>xxx</sup>. While it could be assumed that the language impedes understanding of the songs' messages by the audience, both Amazon reviewers of the album and fans on the Akiakane website (Akiakane is a band formed by the lead singer after Softball disbanded) refer to the power of the lyrics (cf. Akiakane n.d., milkyway86 2003).

In *Remember the hill*, Softball portrays Japanese soldiers, epitomized by the kamikaze, as young, brave and tragic heroes. Softball's songs are not politically involved, but stick to the image of soldiers as young patriots, who desired peace but were forced

to fight and protect their country and who are role models for the present generations. For Softball, the nation's tragic heroes deserve to be remembered and respected. The issue of forgetting the past, both the courageous soldiers as well as Japanese suffering during the war (B-29 raids in Tokyo are mentioned in another Softball song, *Heavenly*), recurs throughout *Lamp*. No aspects of the Asia-Pacific War and Japan's role in it other than soldiers' bravery and Japanese suffering are mentioned in Softball's compositions. This conforms closely to a conservative position on the ideological scale.

Moving further towards the progressive end of the spectrum, another artist who refers to Japanese as aggressors during the war while still focusing on the pacifistic message rooted in the atomic-bombing experience is Hamada Shōgo. Hamada was born in Hiroshima prefecture in 1952. His father was a survivor of the atomic bombing and Hamada was strongly influenced by the war's legacies. He told his story about growing up in postwar Japan and his journey from boyhood to adulthood in a musical trilogy consisting of the albums *Down by the mainstreet* (1984), *J.Boy* (1986) and *Father's son* (1988). He expressed his war-related views most clearly in the last album, which focused on the war's aftermath, its influence on Japan, and post-war Japan-US relations. Hamada clearly addresses war memory and responsibility issues towards neighboring countries, but focuses most strongly on Japan's victimhood.

The song with the clearest references to the atomic bombing is *Hachigatsu no uta* (August song) on the 1986 album *J.Boy*. Here, rooted in the image of Japan as the country which experienced atomic bombing, Hamada leans toward a progressive view in his comments on Japan's responsibility (especially financial) toward the victims of the war in Asia and presents the consequences of these responsibilities.

Every year in August  
Using the name of Hiroshima  
This country calls for peace  
How did we compensate Asia?  
I saw news of  
Cars we produced burning on the streets  
Somewhere in Asia (...)  
This idle anger  
Endless sadness on a morning in August

*Hachigatsu no uta* was written in the middle of the 1980s at the peak of the bubble economy. Hamada juxtaposed Japan's economic wealth with issues of war responsibility and compensation. In *Hachigatsu no uta* Hamada did not criticize pacifist sentiment, but highlighted this irony. He did not name precise instances of Japanese war responsibility, but acknowledged Japanese obligations towards the war's victims in Asia and the need for compensation. He has highlighted the international problems caused by war issues remaining unresolved. Hamada refers to Bob Dylan's song in the phrase 'hard rain is still fallin'" (the only phrase appearing in English), suggesting the continuity of war issues. This combination of acknowledging unresolved war responsibilities and narrating Japan's atomic bombing experience places Hamada around the progressive-leaning category on the ideological spectrum.

While Hamada's awareness of Japan's role as perpetrator places him in the progressive-leaning category, clearly progressive positions can also be found on the Japanese musical stage. Pak Poe, born in 1955 to a Korean father and Japanese mother, is a rock musician writing and performing in Japan. He actively supports Japan—Korea reconciliation and is involved in the pacifist and anti-nuclear movement. Hiroshima has an important place in Pak's activities and also permeates his music. The song *Hiroshima (Never again)*, for example, presents a terrifying description of what happened to people after the nuclear explosion.

Pak Poe also addresses some of Japan's unresolved war responsibility issues, especially relating to Korea. In *Shōi gunjin no uta* (Song of wounded soldiers), Pak sings about three groups, all of which included Koreans victimized in different ways during the Asia-Pacific War (Pak 2014): wounded soldiers<sup>xxxix</sup>, 'comfort women' and forced labourers (Mori and Yasuoka 2002, p. 193):

Without any security  
Without even a little mercy  
They just grow old and die out  
Forgotten

Who did they die for?  
For what kind of just cause? (...)

Buried in a foreign land  
Can they rest in peace?  
Their restless spirits are wandering aimlessly (...)

Wounded soldiers, comfort women, Matsushiro Imperial Headquarters  
However, however, in reality  
The war is not over yet.

The ‘wounded soldiers’ are Korean soldiers who enlisted in the Japanese military but were not given the same rights as Japanese veterans. Under the Military Pension Law restored in August 1953, Japanese veterans received lifelong pensions. In subsequent years several laws guaranteeing pensions and compensation for Japanese veterans and bereaved families were introduced (Itoh 2010, pp. 167-168), but Korean veterans, even though fighting for Japan during the war, were deprived these benefits. Then Pak names the ‘comfort women’, the girls and women from all over Asia who were tricked and/or forced into military prostitution. In 1995, the same year Pak’s album including *Shōi gunjin no uta* was published, Japan established the Asian Women’s Fund, which distributed ‘atonement’ money, although survivors were not officially compensated (Asia-Pacific Journal Feature 2015). In an interview, Pak stated that his original inspiration to sing about ‘comfort women’ was the memoirs of Yoshida Seiji (Pak 2014), but he did not address the controversies surrounding them and the revelation in 1992 that Yoshida’s memoirs were fabricated, which resulted in the retraction of *Asahi* newspaper articles based on Yoshida’s testimony a month after our conversation in 2014<sup>xxxii</sup>. The last issue is the Matsushiro Imperial Headquarters. Construction of this bunker in Nagano prefecture started near the end of the Asia-Pacific War as a shelter to where the emperor and government could be relocated (although it remained unfinished at the end of the war). An estimated six thousand Korean forced laborers were involved in the construction and many died in the extremely bad conditions, although precise numbers are unknown because documents were destroyed at the end of the war (Maeda *et al.* 2007). If treated literally, in *Shōi gunjin no uta* Matsushiro Shelter mirrored the fate of the people being victimized by the Japanese empire by being abandoned and forgotten after the war. Pak intends the shelter to be a metaphor for forced laborers, especially Koreans who died during its construction. The

fate of forced laborers is suggested in the verses about people buried in a foreign land while their sleepless ghosts are unable to rest in peace.

All these groups - Korean veterans, comfort women and forced laborers - were forgotten and left without 'any security, without even a little mercy' in Pak's song. Pak Poe states in this song that as long as these responsibilities remain unresolved, the war has not truly ended. This song was the closing theme song of the 2007 documentary *Ore no kokoro wa makete inai* (My heart is not defeated yet) about a Korean former 'comfort woman' Song Sin-do and her fight, with the support of a Japanese citizens' group, for an official apology for 'comfort women' from the Japanese government (Pak 2016).

Pak Poe openly names all these unresolved issues and states Japan's responsibility towards the victims. This places him on the progressive end of the ideological scale. However, Pak's Korean heritage raises the question of whether he is progressive in a Japanese sense or representative of dominant Korean perspectives. While his nationality may be debated, he is a Japanese musician in that he records his albums in Japan, performs mostly in Japan for Japanese audiences, and sings in Japanese. *Shōi gunjin no uta* is sung fully in Japanese, except for one phrase where Pak repeats the phrase 'wounded soldiers, comfort women, Matsushiro Imperial Headquarters' in English. This use of English is understandable given that Pak spent almost a decade in the United States and he sometimes performs outside of Japan. Nevertheless, Pak works in the Japanese music industry. The messages of his songs place him at the progressive end of ideological scale represented in Japanese music.

Just as the political inclination of AreiRaise can be inferred from their participation in right-wing events, Pak also regularly appears on stage during 'No nukes' concerts. However, there is a relatively small number of performance venues available for ideologically engaged artists. As Manabe (2012) noted,

Broadcast media, particularly television, continues to be an important means for promoting music, and music and broadcasting industry personnel acknowledge that songs critiquing the government, specific companies, or named individuals are unlikely to be aired. Furthermore, musicians airing such views can see a reduction in bookings.

Regardless of their ideological angle, the Japanese music industry is not welcoming towards politically-active artists. In July 2016 the phrase 'Let's not put politics into music' (*Ongaku ni seiji wo mochikomu na*) became prominent on the Japanese Internet and caught the mass media's attention. The critical reaction was caused by youth organization political leader Okuda Aki's appearance at the Fuji Rock Festival. Many online commentators stated that music festival should be a place for musicians only, thus inviting a political activist as speaker was judged as wrong (Tsujita 2016). It is not only fans expressing displeasure with artists' political engagement. In 2012 musician Sakamoto Ryūichi, known from his anti-nuclear activism, was employed as general artistic director for the tenth anniversary celebration of the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media. He was urged by the city council to refrain from political statements (Litera 2017b). The consequences of political engagement can be greater than just warnings. Actor and television personality Ishida Junichi in 2015 spoke out against the introduction of new security legislation. As a result he lost advertising and television appearance contracts (Isesaki 2015). These cases show how the separation of entertainment and politics is enforced by sections of the industry and many fans. In other words, for artists, distancing themselves from certain statements may be helpful for developing a successful (in commercial terms) career.

While all the artists discussed in this section belong to the mainstream, AreiRaise and Pak Poe are closer to the edges of the musical scene, and Softball and Hamada are more in the center. This mirrors the situation regarding sales, as indicated by the Oricon album charts. Softball's top selling album *Lamp* made it to the 20<sup>th</sup> position in the Oricon chart in 2002 (Softball, n.d.). Hamada's *Journey of a songwriter - Tabi suru songuraita* was listed on the chart for 35 weeks in 2015, reaching the top of the chart (Oricon 2017b). This album was in the Oricon chart for the longest, but was one of several of Hamada's albums listed there, and was one of nine albums that reached the top of the chart. None of Pak Poe or AreiRaise's albums ever made it to the Oricon chart. Michie, in her work dedicated to the role of music in activist movements, stated that 'protest music often represents the intersection of politics and fandom' (2013, p. XII). Being the voice of resistance<sup>xxxiii</sup>, raising emotions and unifying people, protest music in its history naturally places itself against the mainstream, and loses its strength when commercialized (Michie 2013, p. XIX). Musicians aspiring to a commercial career,

therefore, are encouraged to avoid strong political statements, whereas the ones devoted to certain causes remain close in nature to fan music.

### **Contradictory messages: The Gazette**

There are several examples of pop cultural works that do not fit neatly into a particular place on Seaton's judgmental memory scale. Internal contradictions in the messages of individual works have been discussed in the case of movies. Gerow (2006) used the examples of *Bokoku no ijisu* (2005) and *Lorelei* (2005) to show that seemingly nationalistic movies can contain humanistic ideals valuing family and locality over the nation, which does not fit into typical understandings of nationalism. Ashbaugh (2010) and Mizuno (2007) discussed the original *Space Battleship Yamato* anime series and the animated movie based on it. They argued that while sending pacifistic messages, the series actually justifies Japanese demands for a fully-fledged military, which contradicts the peace message. Takekawa (2012) focused on the battleship *Yamato* in popular culture (anime and manga) and concluded that it is used as a device to fuse contradictory nationalist messages and anti-conservative ideas such as anti-militarism and internationalism.

Similarly, internal contradictions in expressed messages can be found in songs. The Gazette, a successful *bijuaru kei* (visual) rock band formed in 2002, recorded a song titled *Saraba* (Farewell) in 2004. Among the many Japanese songs I have encountered referring explicitly to the Asia-Pacific War, *Saraba* presents the most mixed messages and an unusual combination of rhetoric. Conservative arguments about gratitude and admiration for the war dead contrast with rhetoric usually associated with a progressive, pacifistic message. The song begins with criticism of war:

Peaceful city, today again cloudless sky, such a fine day (...)  
Radio and television showing victims in foreign countries (...)  
'War cannot be helped' [a journalist] firmly says.  
Anti-war voices sound in vain, they do not reach anyone.  
Tell me, why do humans fight each other, when we're all the same? (...)  
[Sung in English] *An anti-war song I will sing all together (...)*

This heavy-sounding composition presents Japan as a country enjoying peace, but not opposing military conflicts because ‘war cannot be helped’, even though memories of war tragedy are still vivid among its citizens. The bridge is repeated several times each verse and states that it is an anti-war song - this is the only part of the song where phrases in English appear – and the English lines about singing an anti-war song are intertwined with Japanese lines expressing hope for a better future full of happiness and free of suffering. The most interesting fragment, however, comes in the latter part.

(...) Those who have given their lives to protect Japan  
I take pride at being born in that same Japan  
I will remember for my whole life  
The lessons you taught me  
War’s senselessness, sadness, pain and death.  
Thank you. Farewell. You, who became the wind.  
I will protect the Japanese flag.

This part of the song uses conservative rhetoric: brave Japanese soldiers died as honorable heroes and sacrificed their lives ‘to protect Japan’, as opposed to fighting an aggressive war. The band ‘takes pride at being born in the same country’, so they are simply proud of their brave ancestors. This statement resembles the position of AreiRaise, who felt they are children of heroes and wanted to restore pride in their ancestors. But, from this same starting point The Gazette draws a different conclusion. They sing that the lesson learnt is ‘war’s senselessness, sadness, pain and death’, so the acts of soldiers, even though heroic, still taught them that war should be avoided at all costs. This affirmation of the honorable past differs from the fighting spirit of AreiRaise, who claimed that they are deprived of a great past and need to ‘start a war’ (even though only metaphorically) to get it back. The combination of conservative values and pacifism comes close to what McVeigh called ‘peace nationalism’, in that ‘while certainly being anti-war, anti-militarist, and occasionally anti-state, is sometimes still grounded in theories of Japanese exceptionalism and ethnolaudism’ (McVeigh 2004, p. 208). Such a position can be found in mainstream works, but also in many fan productions of different forms.

Although the other bands discussed thus far are not niche musicians, they are not as well known, especially by young people, as The Gazette. Over the fifteen years of the band's career, seven out of their eight full-length albums and all of their singles since December 2005 have reached Oricon's top ten (Oricon 2017a). The only artist they could be compared to among the previously discussed artists would be Hamada. However, he has a different musical style and targets an older audience than the 'visual kei' rock band. The Gazette intensively uses the Internet for promotion. They post regular updates on Twitter and videos on their official YouTube channel, attracting many young fans. Consequently, the range of The Gazette's music is wider than that of the artists discussed thus far, especially among younger generations of fans. While many fans may listen to The Gazette's songs just for their musical qualities without paying much attention to the lyrics, the messages do not go unnoticed. *Saraba's* lyrics are discussed on the song's YouTube page, in Amazon album reviews, and fan forums (Kumo 2006, Hanamiyabi 2012, SeesaaWiki 2014).

### **Evolving messages: Nagabuchi Tsuyoshi**

The last case study of mainstream music is the work of Nagabuchi Tsuyoshi, who has been a singer and actor for over thirty years and is one of the most prominent figures in Japanese popular music. His extensive discography contains several war-related songs. Over the years he has written both conservative and progressive compositions. I will discuss three of them, starting at the progressive end.

The 1980s was the decade in which Japanese research on biological and chemical warfare Unit 731 began in earnest. The boom started after the mystery novelist Morimura Seiichi published in 1981 his famous fiction-based-on-fact work *Akuma no hōshoku* (The devil's gluttony). This bestseller discussed wartime human experiments carried out by Unit 731, which was established in Manchuria in 1939. The following year Morimura published a sequel including American materials, and in 1983 a third volume containing Chinese data (Dickinson 2007). Around this time there was discussion in mainstream media, including several other publications, testimonies by those who worked in the unit, and programs on television. In this atmosphere, in 1983 Nagabuchi wrote and included on his *Heavy gauge* album a song called *Tsumetai*

*gaikokujin* (Cold foreigner), which addressed the issue. The song resembles a metaphorical fairy tale:

A long, long time ago there came a very big man  
Dialed 731 on a black telephone  
A secret number hidden and forgotten among the scars of time (...)  
Grey rain kept falling, Year of ruin 1945  
These men bit their tongues to kill time (...)  
If you throw a stone on the waters of history  
The truth is we are cold foreigners too

Using the metaphor of dialing the phone number seven-three-one, Nagabuchi presents the history of Unit 731 like a forgotten, tragic secret that people refuse to talk about. Even though one verse of the song mentions the suffering of children starving by the breasts of their emaciated mothers, the song's focus is on the people who avoided their responsibility and did not say a word about the medical experiments after the war ended. They coldly 'bit their tongues' and chose to stay 'drowned in blood', going along 'the blind alley towards the future'. In the chorus Nagabuchi repeats, if you 'throw a stone on the waters on history', you'll learn that you are 'a cold foreigner too'. Nagabuchi breaks here with the image of Japan as victim, exposing rather the fact that Japanese caused great harm to other nations as invaders and victimizers, but their crimes remain unacknowledged, and many people are still not aware of them because those responsible refuse to admit their crimes. *Tsumetai gaikokujin* is a rare example of a song by a Japanese popular, mainstream singer dealing literally with the issue of Japanese war crimes.

While *Tsumetai gaikokujin* can be called progressive, another song by Nagabuchi is more progressive-leaning. The song is *Shizuka naru Afghani* (Afghan becoming quiet), a single recorded by Nagabuchi in 2002. It opposed Japan's support for American intervention in Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks the previous year.

This quite ironic-in-tone composition begins by expressing opinion on the conflict in Afghanistan: America fostered the terrorists, but President George Bush imagines a Hollywood scenario in which the American heroes are fighting evil.

Nagabuchi describes the terrors of war, laments that military conflict is occurring again, and makes an appeal for peace at the end of the composition:

I want to ask Hi no maru and Stars and Stripes  
Are war and money really necessary?  
Hiroshima and Nagasaki are crying  
Screaming "Stop it!"

Nagabuchi directly addresses Japan (signified by the flag, Hi no maru) about the necessity of this war. References to Hiroshima and Nagasaki provide the ultimate reason why this aggression should be stopped - 'Hiroshima and Nagasaki are crying, screaming stop it!'. According to Nagabuchi, taking part in this war is irreconcilable with Japan's experience of atomic attack. He presents a clear view that even though officially Japan's engagement in Afghanistan was 'assistance for recovery and reconstruction' (MOFA 2002) and to support the peace process, this cooperation with the military forces of the United States resulted in the deaths of innocent people, which in the perspective of Japan's war experience is unjustifiable. Nagabuchi is therefore critical of any kind of military action, a position which can make the next songs to be discussed seem ironic.

Nagabuchi has also written nostalgic ballads praising soldiers who died for Japan. *Close your eyes* was recorded in 2005 as the theme song for the blockbuster movie *Otokotachi no Yamato* (2005). The song is written from the perspective of a woman thinking about her loved one who will never come back to her:

And yet I love this country  
With my whole heart (...)  
Come back to my heart,  
I want to embrace your courage, you are noble  
White flowers that bloomed on a quiet sea  
Are now piling up on my body (...)  
You will live forever

Nagabuchi sets up the patriotic tone by presenting a woman who accepts her loss because of her endless love for the country that required the man she loved to sacrifice

his life. The sailor as seen through her eyes is a courageous, noble man, for whom the last goodbye was the 'white flowers that bloomed on a quiet sea', which suggests the lapel badges of the sailors when *Yamato* went down. This tender, lullaby-resembling tribute to fallen soldiers creates an image of them as honorable, tragic heroes.

*Close your eyes* is not the only example of such a representation of war in Nagabuchi's work. A similar romantic-conservative vision of Japanese soldiers who died in the war can be found in *Ai shiteiru tsutaete kudasai* (Please tell him that I love him), which was part of the soundtrack for *Kikoku* (2010), a war/fantasy television drama about the spirits of dead soldiers returning to see their homeland. This is another song written from a woman's point of view, presenting the memory of a strong, tender man who will not return home. Another song is *Kamikaze tokkōtai* (2007), which encourages the listener to be like members of special attack squads: truly kind, without fear of getting hurt, always looking for a better tomorrow, and facing love with eyes wide opened. These lyrics attribute to kamikaze many virtues and make them a symbol of fearless love. All these songs present a conservative angle in that brave, honorable members of the Japanese army died as patriots for their country, while little or no questions concerning the cause of the conflict and Japan's role in it are expressed.

Nagabuchi's use of English is also ironic. In *Close your eyes* Nagabuchi addresses deceased navy sailors in English. English is often used in Japan to project an image of 'cool' (Seaton 2001), although in this context it sits uncomfortably with the patriotic message of the song to use the language of the wartime enemy. Surprisingly, the use of English seems to be more widespread among conservatives. Pak Poe and Hamada Shōgo also used English phrases, but in their cases these devices could be explained by the artistic reference (Hamada) or the artist's residence in the US (Pak). For Nagabuchi, however, as with Softball's songs, the use of English is difficult to justify. It not only makes the songs' messages harder to understand for a Japanese audience, but also creates a surprising situation in which a patriotic message is sent in a foreign language and the language of the wartime enemy.

Nagabuchi remains an artist difficult to label. Over time his war-themed songs have ranged from progressive to conservative. Although he is known to have many conservative and right wing fans, and his actions and statements give the impression of an artist himself gravitating towards the conservative/nationalistic end of the ideological spectrum, his recent album *Black train* published in August 2017 contains

some lyrics critical towards the Abe government (Litera 2017a). The album disappointed many nationalists, as they believed that Nagabuchi is unpatriotic by criticizing government and his pride as Japanese expressed in war-themed songs was fake. Nagabuchi did not simply evolve from progressive to conservative, but based on his music holds a complex set of views and on occasions presents contradictory messages.

As can be seen from the above analysis, Japanese mainstream music covers the whole ideological spectrum from nationalist to progressive. It can be concluded that the most politically and ideologically engaged artists remain on the edges of the mainstream, closer to the ‘intersection of politics and fandom’, while mainstream mass media are more in favor of artists expressing their views more vaguely. Within this broader context, I will now discuss the content of war-themed songs created by amateur musicians, who are not limited by the requirements of the mainstream because they use mainly the Internet to promote and distribute their compositions.

### **‘Fan’ musicians - expressing personal beliefs and sharing *kandō***

Not all music creators are professional artists, defined as making a living from their music and being a part of the commercial music industry. Instead, some artists meet the standards of ‘fan’ productions, as defined in Chapter 2. They can be ‘fan bands’ (singers publishing their compositions mainly online, free of charge), or individuals who, often anonymously, post on YouTube covers of popular songs or ‘original’ songs they wrote. Nowadays, many original songs written by amateurs are created with voice synthesizing software (Vocaloid), as I will discuss in the next chapter. As this type of production does not require vocal or instrumental skills, it offers opportunities to skilled software users. Combined with the popularity of cute humanoid figures used as Vocaloid personifications, the Japanese scene of fannish music has been taken over by Vocaloid songs. Even aspiring vocalists tend to start with covers of popular Vocaloid, anime and game-related songs rather than write their own songs. These sometimes popular artists, called *utaite*, post their cover versions on YouTube under the tag ‘*utatemita*’ (I tried to sing) and can reach millions of views, in some cases progressing towards live performances and contracts with commercial labels. Although *utaite* is a prominent category within Japanese fannish activity, I will not analyze it further but

focus instead on original compositions. As the creators discussed from now on are not included in any chart that would in any way demonstrate their popularity, I mention the number of views their songs have received on the primary distribution website to estimate the size of audience these compositions reach.

As I have previously discussed, there are several *aikoku* bands that have become relatively successful. While some release their albums from commercial labels, others appeal less to audiences. They are less musically skilled, compose music in less popular genres, or simply do not aspire to major careers. These 'fan bands' sometimes perform at right-wing events, but also upload their songs online and sell homemade CDs via their websites by mail order. Saneyoshi<sup>xxxiv</sup>, a ballad singer who praises the Japanese spirit and pays respect to fallen soldiers in his compositions, Gokoku Kinnō Gakudan<sup>xxxv</sup>, a rock trio that preaches emperor-centered nationalism, and the punk band Ishinsekiseijuku<sup>xxxvi</sup>, which criticizes the politics and society of present day Japan, all belong to the category of 'fan' *aikoku* bands. However, among these fan bands there is one that has caught the attention of mainstream media, although not because of their musical prowess.

Scramble<sup>xxxvii</sup> is a rock band formed in 2009 and currently consists of four members. The lyrics of their compositions cover a range from nationalism to hate speech. Their musical styles change to match the lyrics and range from sentimental ballads praising fallen soldiers to heavy sounding, aggressive songs with manifestos targeting China, Korea, and Soka Gakkai<sup>xxxviii</sup>, a Buddhist association engaged in peace activism. Scramble became more famous than any other *aikoku* fan band because of their 2013 song *Chon kiru!* (Slash Koreans!). The lyrics called ex-'comfort women' old prostitutes and said they wanted them to die. A copy of this song with a translation into Korean was sent anonymously to Korea, which resulted in a lawsuit against the band (Torres 2013). As a result, Scramble made both the national and international news and became one of the most recognizable politically-engaged fan bands.

In terms of Asia-Pacific War references, the band visibly advocates Yasukuni Shrine worship and glorifies wartime soldiers. The song *Sofu no uta* (Grandfather's song) from 2013 is representative of their views. It focuses on evoking *kandō* and a teary reaction rather than the aggressive, negative emotions of their hate speech songs. The song, as stated in the on-screen introduction (in the YouTube version), is dedicated to the *eirei*, Japan's fallen soldiers who gave their lives for the sake of their country, one

of whom was the lyricist's great uncle. The song is about his grandfather, who was a soldier in Manchuria and Burma:

Grandfather was gentle,  
Grandfather was strict,  
Grandfather was laughing a lot,  
Grandfather was great,  
Grandfather was earnest,  
Grandfather was endeavouring a lot,  
Grandfather was a soldier,  
Because grandfather returned I was born  
Today's Japan is peaceful,  
Because of grandfathers like him (...)

This is the representation of Imperial Japanese Army soldiers as ultimately positive heroes and role models, whose 'wartime suffering and sacrifice [is] the cause of present-day peace and prosperity' (Field 1997, p. 20). This rhetoric of wartime sacrifice as the foundation of Japanese postwar success has been present since 1960s, following growing pride in economic recovery (cf. Orr 2001, pp. 137-139). It has also appeared in official prime ministerial statements relating to the war, for example Prime Minister Koizumi August 15<sup>th</sup> speech in 2006, stating that 'the present peace and prosperity of Japan are built on the precious sacrifices made by those who against their will lost their lives to the war' (Koizumi 2006), and was repeated every year by Prime Minister Abe in his August 15<sup>th</sup> speech between 2013 and 2017. This narrative prevents bereaved family members from feeling their loved ones' deaths were meaningless, and are close to being religious in that it gives meaning to life and death through a set of continuous values, which go beyond the life of the individual and connects people now to a community in which they can feel pride. Smith (2011, p. 233) stated that

ethnic nationalism becomes a "surrogate" religion which aims to overcome the sense of futility engendered by the removal of any vision of an existence after death, by linking individuals to persisting communities whose generations form indissoluble links in a chain of memories and identities.

This religious-like aspect of life rooted in gratefulness towards the *eirei* and connections with them is stated even more clearly in another of Scramble's songs, *Tsuioku* (Reminiscence).

The band performs mostly during right-wing events and sells their homemade CDs during concerts or via their homepage. But what singles them out from other bands is the effort they put into music video production. Their music videos, starring band members and their friends (who are often not willing to show their faces, which are obscured using masks and camera angles), are clearly amateur productions, but nevertheless carefully planned and executed to strengthen the song's message, or even provide it with a new meaning. *Tsuioku* was recorded in 2015 as the band's contribution to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war's end. The video description on YouTube states: 'A girl bullied for offering prayers for her great-grandfather who fought for the country is changing her surroundings with her patriotism, the *eirei*'s words and the thoughts of her great-grandfather'. While the song is a quiet, nostalgic ballad for which the lyrics could be interpreted as a confession of love, the core message is in the music video. On a purely textual level the song does not contain any war history references:

Praying with my eyes closed  
Praying in silence  
That day with you  
When I saw the light of the Sun  
Thinking of you  
The memory of you  
Is what I hold  
One letter (...)

However, the impression is very different when watching the music video. A girl of approximately high school age is visiting Yasukuni, praying while holding in her hands an old lighter that presumably belonged to her great-grandfather enshrined in Yasukuni. Meanwhile two boys play *janken* (rock-paper-scissors) to decide which one of them will hand her an envelope which resembles a love letter. When the girl opens the envelope, the message in big letters reads 'die!' Both boys (shown from their noses down) laugh

evilly with satisfaction, and later physically assault the girl. The next scene shows classmates throwing paper at her during a history class. When told that 'special attack unit members died in vain' the girl cannot take it anymore. She stands up, throws the textbook at her teacher, who is knocked over, and says 'the truth' to her class while wiping off the 'lies' about Japan written on the blackboard. The moment is accompanied by louder, higher notes in the soundtrack, which clearly brighten the mood of the video. The girl goes to Yasukuni, where she is approached by her former bullies. Both boys bow deeply, express apology and respect, and follow her to the shrine where they worship together.

The message of the video is clear: in a society where patriots are oppressed by people without honor who repeat anti-Japanese lies, strength and true faith put in the heroism of ancestors can guide you. Ultimately, you can gain respect and finally convert 'non-believers' by impressing them with your spirit. The video is strongly rooted in the 'anti-Japanese Japanese' discourse, as discussed by Gustafsson (2015, pp. 47-52). Japanese nationalists regularly criticize liberals for promoting 'masochistic' (*jigyakuteki*) narratives of Japanese history, with a special focus on 'masochistic education' or 'anti-Japanese education'.

The cause of Japan's current social ills, crime and bullying at schools, they argue, is Japan's "extreme anti-war pacifism", which has been taught in schools by anti-Japanese Japanese (...). This has ostensibly resulted in a lack of patriotism and of identification with the state (Gustafsson 2015, p. 48).

Scramble's creation conforms to these views. It shows non-Yasukuni worshippers as oppressive, aggressive bullies, lacking in values, and accepting 'lies' about Japanese war history. While this perspective on Japanese education and resulting problems conforms closely to the views promoted by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukuru-kai*) (cf. Saaler 2005, Nozaki 2008), Scramble does not call for a change in the school curriculum. For them, the demoralized society can be saved by being good examples of strong-spirited 'believers'.

The connections between state, religious belief and sacrificing one's life for the nation are discussed by Takahashi Tetsuya and Lee Hyo Duk. In 'Yasukuni-ism', as they call it, state Shinto with the emperor cult placed in its center becomes 'a nonreligious

religion, a "supra" religion. (...) The state is made religious' (Takahashi and Lee 2007). It is also the only thing to which it is worth offering any sacrifice. Authors note that '[i]n religions and creeds that posit a transcendent being, faith makes possible the sublation of a harsh reality by introducing a viewpoint that allows the believer to relativize that reality and even to promote its criticism' (Takahashi and Lee 2007). Scramble's creation can be seen as fan band rendition of 'Yasukuni-ism'. As emphasized by the lyrics, the girl's constant thoughts of her great-grandfather give her strength to endure the bullying and criticize the teacher, and finally leads to the conversion of others. Wartime sacrifice has a transcendent value, guiding the believer through present-day challenges.

Scramble's efforts to play during right-wing events, record and distribute CDs, make their songs widely available on the Internet, and produce music videos have the strong mark of fan productions. They are done by a group of enthusiasts in their free time, using widely accessible amateur tools. They are not really aspiring professional musicians, but rather 'preachers' of nationalistic ideas who use their productions for spreading ideas they believe in strongly on a personal level. Grossberg (1992, p. 86) suggested that popular culture and cultural performance based on affective investment in certain issues can result in empowerment 'in a world in which pessimism has become common sense', setting the ground for 'the optimism, invigoration and passion which are necessary for any struggle to change the world'. Grossberg believes that popular culture through affect can support ideological movements aiming at social and political change, and without it the possibility of any struggle changing the world 'is likely to be drowned in a sea of historical pessimism' (1992, p. 87). Scramble, despite reaching only a few thousands of listeners<sup>xxxix</sup> and receiving singular comments on their songs, seem highly invested in their musical activity, which is akin to pop cultural political activism.

Not all fan musicians, however, are so dedicated to a certain idea, and not all of them resemble commercial performers in their artistic activity. Some artists introduce themselves as singers (*kashu*), but focus on online activity, attracting different numbers of followers. For example, the female pop writer and performer Byakkohime<sup>xl</sup>, who in her aspiration to create music centered around 'Japaneseness' wrote among others *Nihon wo mamotta Zero no uta (Jiiku)* (Song of Zero protecting Japan [Zeke]), presents a standard conservative narrative praising kamikaze pilots and presenting them as unsurpassed role models. Byakkohime, who grew up in the family of former Imperial Navy members, listened to war stories from her early childhood and became fascinated

with them. She believes there are a lot of prejudices nowadays surrounding *tokkō* members, and she wanted to express explicitly that people who offered the ultimate self-sacrifice deserve deep love and respect. In personal communication with Byakkohime, she stated that the song was welcomed by her audience, with many comments strongly supporting her conservative views (Byakkohime 2017). In Byakkohime's compositions the message is straightforward, avoids nuance and makes the author's intentions clear.

More complex compositions have been created by other fan musicians. Kumuri Sora and Hasui Yūto (together named Yūzora) are vocalists co-working under the self-produced label Universal Friendship. They distribute their works primarily via their YouTube channel, whose name summarizes accurately the artists' aims: *Kandō suru uta nakeru kyoku todokemasu* (Kumuri Sora, Hasui Yūto, Yūzora, Trigonometry) Universal Friendship Associations<sup>xli</sup> (We deliver songs that deeply move you and make you cry). The duo produces pop ballads with elements of Japanese traditional music, accompanied by music videos combining text, photographs, live-action and animated footage. Songs cover different themes that could be seen as providing *kandō* to listeners: family bonds, romantic love, and friendship. It is not surprising, therefore, that war-themed songs can be found in the website, too.

The duo created two war-themed songs for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war's end in 2015, followed by the third part of the series composed individually by Hasui Yūto. The musical trilogy tells one wartime story. Each composition (like all their works) is given a very descriptive title. The first installment was *Sensō no kandō suru uta/nakeru kyoku. Wafū ongaku to wagakki de Taiheiyō sensō ga daizai no utsukushiku mo hakanai kazokuai wo egaku 'Enraiaika' (gasshō) Kumuri Sora x Hasui Yūto (Yūzora)* (Deeply moving war song/piece that makes you cry. A Pacific War-themed song about beautiful, short-lived family love with Japanese-style music and Japanese instruments. 'Sad song of distant thunder' (chorus) Kumuri Sora x Hasui Yūto [Yūzora]) (hereafter *Enraiaika*). These elaborate song names are more of an advertisement and promise of *kandō* than an actual title, and for the sake of brevity I will limit the other song names to the keywords seemingly closest to actual title: *Uchiage hanabi* (Fireworks display) for the second installment and *Marui sen* (Round thread) for the third. The manner of naming songs emphasizes the crucial importance of *kandō* for the musicians, as well as an attempt to attract people seeking this type of content. The trilogy is based on Hasui

Yūto's idea. Born in Nagasaki prefecture, Hasui considered war history a taboo and never specifically studied it, but simultaneously felt that these traumatic experiences were always close. He has even experienced war-themed nightmares since early childhood (Hasui 2017). Hasui was struggling with health problems when he began his musical project, so he decided to combine the theme of appreciating each and every life with the theme of war as the 70<sup>th</sup> war's end anniversary approached. He wrote a short story called *Kaishun no hiseki. Sacrament of penance and reconciliation*, which he turned with the help of Kumuri Sora into musical compositions (Hasui 2017). The songs are described by the creators as 'music films', and the whole story is told using a combination of lyrics, recorded dialogs, on-screen text, photographs, animation and live action segments.

*Enraiaika*, posted on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, tells the story of the Higurashi brothers during the war in Nagasaki. The younger brother, Riku, is paraplegic. The older brother, Jin, who is described as very gentle and smart, takes great care of him. They spend happy times together until Jin decides to volunteer for the army to protect his loved ones. Jin makes Riku promise that he will survive until the end of the war and live a happy life. Jin leaves his lonely and heartbroken brother behind when going to the front, hoping that they will see each other again. The story remains unresolved at this point, and at the end Riku is left with memories of the happy times the brothers spent together. Riku hopes he will be as useful to the country as his brother one day.

This narrative is hardly original. It resembles multiple Japanese war movies, which as Yau Shuk Ting (2014, p. 69) notes, 'tend to romanticize low-ranking young soldiers by depicting them as peace-loving Japanese reluctantly drawn into the war. They embark on *kamikaze* or *ningen gyorai* (human torpedo) missions in order to protect their loved ones'. A story of young and caring brothers separated by the tragedy of war is an archetypal *kandō* narrative that touches the audience with the dramas affecting innocents. This perception is confirmed by comments left online by those who viewed the video. The video was posted in three versions<sup>xlii</sup>, which received together about eighty thousand views, strongly favorable ratings and around fifty comments (up to September 2017). Most comments said that the composition made viewers feel *kandō* and think about the tragedy of war, and praised the video.

*Uchiage hanabi*, posted on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, presents more of the brothers' story. The song is told from the perspective of an aging Riku, who is telling his family's story to

his two happy grandsons. Viewers learn that Jin dreamt of becoming a doctor so he could cure Riku's legs one day. During the war father's illness made him unable to join the army. He was labeled a *hikokumin* (literally 'un country person', namely a 'traitor') and the family was ostracized. Because of the 'good news that came one morning, a red card [*akagami*, draft notification] filled with lies' Jin had no choice but to fulfill his duty as required by the state. The unhappy boy took the train, while Riku struggled with saying an unbearable goodbye.

The tone of the second installment differs considerably from the first one, even though there were originally planned as two parts of one story. More focus is put on the militaristic state as an oppressor. The father's illness is not accepted as excuse from military service and citizens are obliged to react to their call-up as if it was an honor, even though it brings only suffering. This perspective is recognizable as one of the main elements of 'victim consciousness', with Japanese citizens portrayed as innocent victims of their own military (cf. Orr 2001, pp. 80-87). In comparison with the conservative in tone of the first part, which did not mention any of the state's wrongdoings, *Uchiage hanabi* goes clearly against the militarist state. In terms of reception, this video reached around forty thousand views (up to September 2017) with 95% of ratings being positive and several *kandō* comments.

The third and final part, *Marui sen*, was uploaded on December 25<sup>th</sup> 2015. It starts with a graphic content warning and a disclaimer that the events presented are fictional. The first three minutes thirty seconds give the impression of a movie, and has narration by Jin and some dialogs. The sequence shows Jin being deployed to Manchuria. Following his dream of saving lives by becoming a doctor, the boy finds himself in a medical unit, only to find out that acts of violence are performed there by the Japanese military. Jin is horrified with the human experiments in Unit 731. He opposes his supervisor, who tries to convince the boy these experiments are conducted for the greater good. With cries for help sounding in English in the background, Jin states that he wanted to save lives, so his body should be used for the experiment instead. The scene ends disturbingly with a view on the surgical lights and a cry of pain. The song itself is Jin's goodbye for his brother, and last scene shows him being reborn in the present day.

The content of *Marui sen* is very rare among other fan productions. The protagonist remains a true hero, sacrificing his life in resistance to wrongdoings. Hasui

Yūto's (contrary to first two parts, the third one is his individual project) open and graphic depiction of Japanese war crimes in a pop cultural form, especially a fan production, is unusual. Presenting the Japanese army's responsibility for atrocities in Unit 731, which is clearly progressive content, would also hardly be expected after watching the first part of the series. Until September 2017 *Marui sen* had reached close to eight thousand views, with 87% positive ratings but no comments.

I contacted the creators to ask about the background of their project. Their responses reveal that they did not feel equally comfortable dealing with the difficult topic of war crimes. In Hasui's original short story the events shown in *Uchiage hanabi* come first, followed by *Enraiaika* and *Marui sen*. In the coproduction with Kumuri (parts 1 and 2) the artists tackled the least controversial content, but the stronger antimilitarist stance and dramatic content was in Hasui's solo project (part 3). Kumuri Sora was dedicated to his part in the creation of the two first installments. He looked for inspiration in war movies and learned about the past, including the history of Unit 731, but ultimately he backed off from the final part. Nevertheless, Kumuri was supportive of the whole project. He believes that young people today do not have many chances to gain awareness considering issues of war and social problems. As a creator he is happy if his compositions make young people think of these issues even if only a little (Kumuri 2017). Hasui produced the final part with its devastating storyline in which Jin trades his life for a POW's life. Hasui distanced himself from the idea that the composition makes a political statement, and treats the story as a spiritual rather than ideological tale. He said he firmly believes in the sanctity of life. In the story he wanted to focus mainly on the equality of human lives. Jin perceived the prisoner as if he was his little brother, and through this Hasui hoped to emphasize the value of peace. As an individual it is hard to promote peace, but he thinks his songs can reach many people and spread a message of peace.

At the time he was producing the video in 2015, a new law that provides the Japan Self-Defense Force with the legal means to engage in military actions outside of Japan in defense of allies was passed amidst much protest. Hasui believed that at that moment, when Japanese attitudes towards the war had the potential to change, it was particularly important to carefully consider the value of life. He was, moreover, motivated in his work by the awareness of war generation passing away. No lives lost in war should ever be forgotten, and war-themed works memorialize the victims of war

(Hasui 2017). Both creators, therefore, shared the desire to raise awareness about the past and send strong humanistic and pacifistic messages. This emerged as a stronger driver than a desire to stimulate discussion regarding Japanese war responsibility through their work. At the same time they were reluctant to give interpretative details, believing that the audience should interpret their works freely. Hasui used his freedom as a fan musician and decided to tackle a topic rarely discussed in popular culture, even though he was not interested in discussing his work's ideological implications. He might be well aware that going into details of the issues he presented in his work could make him a target of nationalists' aggressive comments. Right-wingers are well known for verbally attacking progressives openly stating their views, such as academics and journalists, in a violent manner (cf. Kingston 2014). Hasui's reluctance towards expressing a strong ideological statement could be related to sensitivity about nationalists' aggressive criticism that he wants to avoid. *Marui sen* remains the only fan musician work with clearly progressive content that I have encountered, even though it was created not to promote progressive views on war history, but as an element of a tale about sanctity of life.

The last phenomenon that needs to be mentioned when discussing war-themed fan music is that many individuals seem not to perceive of themselves as musicians. They accompany themselves on a guitar or keyboard (so called *hikigatari*, 'singing to one's own accompaniment'), and they upload often anonymous and faceless videos of themselves covering popular songs or playing their original compositions. These performers most often do not aim at great popularity (as they remain anonymous) and do not achieve it. Their songs are not always of high musical quality and receive on average a few hundred views. They are intended not so much to bring authors popularity and made them recognizable, but rather as to be a means of self-expression with a focus on the authors' emotions. The lack of promotion and online popularity makes them relatively hard to find, but some that I have found focus on peace-related issues. They range from conservative-leaning to conservative. The videos I have seen included: a song about a brave woman whose husband died in the war, so she finds her everyday strength in the memory of his kindness (*Orokana jidai, minikui sensō* [Foolish times, disgraceful war]); a song expressing gratitude to *kamikaze* pilots, which emphasizes how small the present generation is in comparison to the generation that devoted itself to the country as heroes (*Chiran*); and a song or allegory-style tale of two

people who had a fight, in which every action provoked greater violence, until the conflict grew to include even their descendants (*Me ni wa me wo* [Eye for eye]), which was written for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war's end. The last of these songs is visibly rooted in a personal belief in the wrongness of military conflict. This makes it similar to many other original *hikigatari* songs, including those that do not refer in any specific way to Asia-Pacific war.

## Conclusions

I began the chapter by showing that, as with other popular culture formats such as cinema and manga, the war-related messages in popular music in Japan cover the whole ideological spectrum from nationalist to progressive. While some of the less popular bands and artists target a more specific group of listeners and present coherent, stronger war-related ideological messages (or even, especially in the case of *aikoku* bands, make the war one of the most important themes of their work), the treatment of war in the music of most popular mainstream stars can be ambiguous or inconsistent, either in their overall discography or even within one song. Awareness of Japanese war crimes, victim consciousness, pacifism and admiration for the war dead are not necessarily contradictory ideas, but rather ideas that resonate with different individuals in Japanese society. Avoiding extremism and using flexible ideas allows a big group of fans simply to enjoy the song and make it a commercial success. Too much ideological involvement by the artist is not welcomed by producers and many fans, who actively discourage musicians from such engagement. While pacifistic messages are generally praised, conservative ideas also find a big market. Nostalgic ballads like *Close your eyes* or *Kudan*, which evoke sadness, nostalgia and pride, seem to be widely enjoyed by a deeply moved audience.

Fan musicians are not bound by contracts with commercial labels and make a living via other means. They have fewer restrictions in presenting a clear message. When Henry Jenkins (1992, p. 258) discussed fan music making, he stated that in comparison with other fan activities such as commentary and the production of derivative works, music 'more often speaks directly about fandom as a distinctive social community', playing a role of the 'cultural expression of the ideals, beliefs, and activities

of fandom, as a means of articulating an alternative social identity, and as a resource for integrating the community's diverse interests.' Fan music certainly is a sphere where fandom meets political activism, and songs express the writer's personal beliefs rooted in affect. War-themed fan compositions are generally related to at least the musician's basic political and historical interests, and can therefore become their active commentary on present-day political changes, once again confirming the strong bond between music and activism. Sometimes, in the tradition of protest songs, fan music can be used as a persuasive measure with the goal of attracting the audience to the performers' beliefs. This is particularly the case for conservatives and nationalists and the phenomenon of *aikoku* bands. The promotion of progressive views is hardly found in fan productions and takes place rather in real-life political activism.

In the case of mainstream music consumption the song can be consumed in a variety of ways, including concerts, CDs, radio, television and the Internet, so the music and lyrics are crucial for understanding a song's message because it is primarily listened to. Fan musicians, on the other hand, use primarily the Internet to distribute their songs, which results in their consumption primarily in a video form. Consequently, listeners cannot ignore the visuals, and the accompanying music videos can carry as much or even more of a message than the song's lyrics.

The ideological spectrum present in modern Japanese war-related songs reflects the variety of opinions present in Japanese society. With moderate or less clear statements preferred by the industry, more politically active musicians with clear nationalistic or progressive views remain at the edges of the Japanese musical scene, but the commercial market has space for all factions. Fan musicians, free of the boundaries established by the industry and the rules of commercial success, can focus on self-expression, explicitly stating their opinions in their works. While at least one progressive song could be found, conservative-leaning to nationalistic content comprises the vast majority of amateur-created compositions. Even these *kandō*-providing, conservative musical narratives do not necessarily go hand in hand with conservative values as presented in political perspective, as most of them are firmly rooted in pacifism and anti-militarism. Commercial and fan music may differ in form and content, but many compositions of both types seem to share a belief in the wrongness of war, even when representing soldiers as ultimately noble victims of war.

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<sup>xxvi</sup> A traditional Japanese sentimental ballad presenting idealized and romanticized stories of love, and themes of loss and enduring life's hardships.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Further information about the bands' activities and song samples are available on performers' websites and social media:

Miburō official Facebook profile:

<https://www.facebook.com/%E5%A3%AC%E7%94%9F%E7%8B%BC-553479161359377/>

Angercall's official Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/angercall?lang=en>

Laiya Official Website: <http://www.laiya-jpn.com/index2.html>

R-Shitei Official Website: <http://www.r-shitei.net/pcmain/>

<sup>xxviii</sup> A transcription of the lyrics is available here: <http://amotoyamatotake.blog.fc2.com/blog-entry-125.html> Lyrics for songs by other bands are from [www.utamap.com](http://www.utamap.com) and [j-lyric.net](http://j-lyric.net). All lyrics were translated from Japanese by the author.

<sup>xxix</sup> One such performance can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7CdeBguqfw>

<sup>xxx</sup> This surprising artistic measure of including English words in nationalistic/conservative lyrics is also repeated by other artists, for example rapper R-Shitei, who repeatedly chants 'aikoku revolution' in his song *Aikoku kakumei*, calling for the awakening of a weak society and restoration of high moral values based on patriotism.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Many materials and documents about wounded soldiers, their families and their war/postwar experiences can be found in Shōkei-kan, a museum in Tokyo dedicated to the topic. Further information can be found here: <http://www.shokeikan.go.jp/index.html>

<sup>xxxii</sup> In August 2014, *Asahi Shinbun*, under pressure from conservatives, apologized and retracted the series of articles it published over the years based on the testimony of Yoshida Seiji, which had been shown to be fabricated. Cf. <http://japanfocus.org/-David-McNeill/4264/article.html>

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Both the rightwing and leftwing place themselves in opposition to the 'mainstream', calling for awareness of their ideas and active participation to change the status quo.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Saneyoshi's official website: <http://saneyoshi.net/index.html>

<sup>xxxv</sup> Gokoku Kinnō Gakudan official website: <http://gkgakudan.blog33.fc2.com/page-1.html>

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Websites providing information about Ishinsekiseijuku's activity:

<http://www.k5.dion.ne.jp/~hide-cha/index.htm>, <http://ameblo.jp/hide542835/>

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Scramble's official website: <http://scramble02.web.fc2.com/index.html>

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Scramble's song *Chin hanii remon* (Strange honey lemon) accuses the association of harassing people for money and brainwashing their followers. In addition to the explicit lyrics, at the end of the music video nationalistic heroes stab a money thirsty personification of Soka Gakkai to death.

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<sup>xxxix</sup> Numbers of views of their songs on YouTube vary from one to about four thousand.

<sup>xl</sup> Byakkohime's official website: <http://www.getstage.com/artist/detail.php?id=3345>

<sup>xli</sup> Yūzora's YouTube channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZNTIdNMwMwx\\_rq2aaEy8hQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZNTIdNMwMwx_rq2aaEy8hQ)

<sup>xlii</sup> Versions differ in terms of the vocals and music videos. There is an older brother version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRse79mxGWk>,

a younger brother version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5Hq-IrSUoU> and a chorus

version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diNr5Hio7gU>. The lyrics and music remain the same in all three.

## Chapter 5

### War-themed fan-produced videos

This chapter discusses two forms of fan-produced videos that can be found online. The first are fanvids, combining third-party music and video footage, and the second are Vocaloid videos, which are primarily originally composed songs created with a voice synthesizer, accompanied by visuals, and distributed in video form. Some fanvids and Vocaloid videos tell a fictional story set in the war era, others are commentaries on a pre-existing work of fiction, and others offer an interpretation of historical events. They can be made using footage from commercial movies, archival recordings, or original animation, but all can be categorized as derivative works that are rooted deeply in external narratives and draw heavily from other pop cultural works. The overall atmosphere of the videos is influenced by the music, which can be fight songs from game soundtracks, popular romantic ballads, or original scores written by the video creators and performed by the synthesized voices of Vocaloid software.

Despite the wide variety of music genres, themes and footage types, and the lack of limitations other than the authors' creativity, almost all war-themed fan-produced videos seem to share a certain form of narrative. They touch upon themes of sacrifice and bravery, heroic acts motivated by love, or narratives of civilian (especially children's) victimhood. What connects them most clearly is the creator's goal of evoking a deep emotional response among viewers with the combination of music and visuals. In this chapter, I will be analyzing war-themed fan-produced videos, defining how conservatism in relation to Japanese war history relates to the *kandō* experience of fan movies viewing.

#### Creating videos as fan practice

All fan-produced videos discussed in the chapter are made with computer software, of more or less advanced features, by users of different skills. Creators (individuals or small groups) remain anonymous or are known under their Internet usernames, but refrain from showing their faces or making personal data available.

Videos are made public free of charge to be enjoyed by anyone who is interested, and are only occasionally available for purchase for dedicated fans. Digital fan videos are an example of 'participatory culture which transforms the experience of media consumption into the production of new texts, indeed of a new culture and a new community' (Jenkins 1992, p. 46). Despite this shared base, however, there are some vital differences between the types of videos, and the amount of academic attention given to them. I will discuss them before progressing into detailed analysis of war-themed works.

First are fan montages of third party-content video and music, broadly called fan videos (hereafter 'fanvids'), created in the process called 'vidding' as defined by Jenkins (2010, sec. 1):

Vidding is one of the oldest forms of DIY remix. Invented and still largely practiced by women, vidding is an art form in which mass media texts, primarily television and movies, are remixed into fan music video. In the mid-1970s, women created vids with slides; in the 1980s, they used VHS footage, editing with home equipment and tape-to-tape machines. Today, vids are made with digital footage using computers and sophisticated digital tools, and vidders – who have always been interested in aesthetics as well as argument – have more and more opportunities to bend the both style and content of pop culture to their will and taste.

Fanvids, known in Japan as MADs (*Myūjikkū Anime Dōga*), date back more than forty years, although the Internet has enhanced their popularization. Fanvid creators, known as vidders, use material from live action movies and TV-shows, animations, video games, manga, graphics, photographs and documentaries. They combine visuals with the music of their choice. Although Japanese creators also use instrumentals or Western music sometimes, the hits of Japanese pop and rock bands, anime and video game soundtracks are more popular. Coppa (2008) argues that 'fannish vidders use music in order to comment on or analyze a set of preexisting visuals, to stage a reading, or occasionally to use the footage to tell new stories'. In fanvids music is used as an interpretative tool to illustrate visuals and give them a new context. Fanvids can be seen as 'a visual essay that stages an argument, and thus it is more akin to arts criticism than

to traditional music video' (Coppa 2008). A separate category is fanvids created with anime footage, so-called AMVs (Anime Music Videos). AMVs play a vital role for the anime fandom. They often introduce new audiences to a title they would not encounter otherwise. During manga and anime conventions AMV screening have become one of major attractions, attracting large audiences in the screening rooms. The best vidders have a 'celebrity' status in the fan community, and their works are widely recognized. AMVs are popular in North America and created mainly by Western fans of anime, with Japanese vidders more often using types of footage other than anime. The practice of vidding has been discussed by several scholars, beginning with Jenkins' seminal study (1992, pp. 228-254). Jenkins argues that vidding requires the same creativity and aesthetics as producing original works and brought derivative works, including fan videos, to scholars' attention Coppa (2008, 2009), Horwatt (2010), Turk (2010) and Turk and Johnson (2012) developed the concept of vidding as a means of creative self-expression and an interpretative tool exploring narrative aspects that were underdeveloped (or even sometimes non-existent) in the original text. Itō (2010, 2012), Lessing (2008) and Roberts (2012) focused their research on the role of AMVs in Western manga/anime fandom.

Vidders are motivated and inspired to work by different factors. 'The aim of these creators is in part to learn. It is in part to show off. It is in part to create works that are strikingly beautiful. The work is extremely difficult to do well' (Lessing 2008, p. 77). Creating fanvids is challenging, a point appreciated both by viewers and other vidders who understand the amount of effort and time (one video can take up to several hundred hours) required to create a video. The digital era makes 'showing off' easier, enabling the presentation of one's work to the whole world with one click. It provided fans with new opportunities, including access to media production tools as well as 'means for communicating about and trafficking in cultural content' (Itō 2006, p. 50). The MADs discussed in this chapter are mainly uploaded on NicoNico Dōga, but they can also be found on YouTube. This makes videos easily accessible for viewers, with some reaching hundreds of thousands of views.

Fans 'appropriat[ing] program images and popular songs as the material basis for their own creations' (Jenkins 1992, pp. 232-233) is, along with *dōjinshi*, a fan practice visibly rooted in preexisting fandoms. With editing tools, footage and distribution means so easily available, any text can become source for fan production. In the case of MADs,

vidders use not only mainstream media, but also history and ideology, while others are inspired by sports, technologies or professions. Anything that they consider important for themselves and want to share with the world in the online video form can be in the videos. This does not mean that fanvids can only aesthetically repeat the content of the original. On the contrary, as Coppa noted, adding music gives the edited visuals additional meaning. Jenkins (2010, sec. 2-3) argued that

[v]ids can make very sophisticated arguments about the source text's plot and characters, and even its ideology. (...) While most mass media stories have a forward-moving, plot-driven structure, music video is more like poetry: expressive rather than descriptive, concerned with feelings and rhythm rather than the distanced narration of events.

This emphasis confirms that fanvids are not only a tribute to the fandom the vidder is attached to, but primarily an interpretative tool allowing vidders to present to the audience how they feel about the original text and which element they see as most important. This role of fanvids is crucial for understanding how this type of video production can promote a certain fandom, as well as understanding the way the audience will feel about and perceive the original text, often even before knowing it, only based on the fanvids they saw.

The fan practice of creating songs accompanied by videos using Vocaloid software differs slightly from the source material remix discussed above. Vocaloid is a singing voice synthesizer into which the user inputs self-written lyrics in the form of syllables together with corresponding notes and singing effects. The software then creates a song performed by a voice mapped on real person's singing voice. Used currently by people both in the music industry and amateurs, Vocaloid software is used for composing original songs as well as covers of popular hits. Users can choose from several vocals, depending on the Vocaloid type. The practice is mainly analyzed from the perspective of software development and the music industry rather than as a fan practice. Despite its short history, Vocaloid has become a huge phenomenon recognized among Japanese pop culture fans all over the world, and has slowly gained attention from scholars working within culture studies. For example, Jackson and Dines (2016, pp. 101-110) analyzed Vocaloid through the tradition of Japanese *Bunraku* puppet theatre,

and Conner (2016, pp. 129-147) placed the phenomenon in the context of virtual performers in the history of entertainment and popular culture.

Vocaloid software dates back to March 2000, when Yamaha Corporation started developing it. Yamaha released the first software in 2004 (Kenmochi 2008, p. 35). The breakthrough for Vocaloid software was a module introduced to Vocaloid 2 in 2007 by the Sapporo-based company Crypton Future Media, which gave the software a 'human' face by adding a virtual animated persona (Zaborowski 2016, p. 115). The first so-called 'Character Vocals' was Hatsune Miku, a young anime-style girl with two blue ponytails, who sang using the voice of Saki Fujita.

Miku was the first and until now has been the most popular Vocaloid avatar not only in Japan but globally among fans of Japanese popular culture. She is much more than a software character. She is a Japanese idol with big fan base, who has starred in commercials (including becoming the face of Toyota Corolla campaign), inspired bullet train design, starred in a rhythm game (video game challenging the player to dance or simulate music performance in the sequence given on screen), been on tour with Lady Gaga (when she opened Lady Gaga's concerts as a hologram), and went on her own world tour in 2016 performing 'live' in Taiwan and in the US. Miku was followed by other virtual celebrities, like Megurine Luka or Kagamine Rin and Len. Each avatar is given personal data, like age, weight, and height, family or friends relationships and various preferences like favorite food or color. Fans on the Internet discuss these Vocaloid features, as if they were talking about real people. As Zaborowski (2016, pp. 123-124) pointed out based on his audience research, for many fans Vocaloid idols are equally, or even more, real than actual humane teenage idols, who are perceived as 'fake' or pretentious in comparison with Miku, who 'represents a bottom-up, collective model where access and participation are potentially unlimited' (p.124).

Vocaloid generates huge consumption by fans in the forms of songs listened to and videos watched online, as well as albums, accessories, and collectible items. It is fans' active use of software and characters, however, that makes Vocaloid unique. Crypton Future Media uses a PiaPro (Peer Production) Character License, a version of Creative Commons. As explained by Zaborowski (2016, p. 116) users can reuse and transform Vocaloid characters for non-commercial purposes, thereby legally creating derivative works for free. But if the project becomes commercial, a legal agreement between the user and the company is established. Under this agreement thousands of

songs, original art designs and *dōjinshi* are created by fans for fans, with some being commissioned by Crypton and used commercially for T-Shirts, art books and albums. Crypton's copyright policy encourages fan productions, rewarding creators looking for acknowledgement of their works and their popularization<sup>xliii</sup>. Vocaloid users create the musical content they imagined, writing lyrics and notes without any limits other than their software-managing skills. They can be vocalists and composers without vocal or instrumental skills, and without forming a band. Users pay tribute to Hatsune Miku (or other avatars), using her directly as a character in the stories they tell in their composition or videos. Vocaloids, therefore, are more than simply a tool providing fans with a means of content-focused self-expression. It is a fandom in its own right and inspires cultural participation among people fascinated with virtual idols in the same way that other character-driven media encourages creation of derivative works.

Finally, both vidders and Vocaloid creators can be seen as fans of creative activity itself. A particular fandom (or content consumed) inspires them to create particular videos, sometimes on the same theme, but sometimes inspired by various titles and stories. For example, I have seen a channel of a vidder posting tributes to *Eien no Zero* alongside a tribute to the *Rurōni Kenshin*<sup>xliv</sup> franchise, and a Vocaloid creator who posted a song about a kamikaze pilot and also a forbidden love between an angel and a demon. The war, therefore, is only one of various topics that have inspired the creators discussed in this chapter. The productions discussed are not an indication that war history is the primary interest of the vidders, but they do reveal the emotional response to war-themed media consumption.

### **Fan-produced videos as emotional medium**

All the online videos discussed in this chapter were created non-commercially by fans for fans using computer software. They all refer to the history of the Asia-Pacific War and combine music and visuals, varying from third-party footage to original creations. Another feature shared by these productions is their high emotionality, often connected to the conservative view of history they are presenting. While searching for war-related content among this type of video on NicoNico Dōga and YouTube<sup>xlv</sup> I was not able to find any work representing progressive views – either using progressive

movies or Vocaloid compositions touching upon the topic of Japanese aggression and war responsibility<sup>xlvi</sup>. They usually present a 'feel good' narrative about Japanese heroism (not only soldiers, but civilians like Sugihara Chiune, a diplomat who saved Jews in Lithuania) or moving images of civilian suffering, focusing on the Hiroshima bombing and air raids<sup>xlvi</sup>. Marshall McLuhan stated that "the medium is the message" because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action' (1964, p. 9). While this assertion may be debated across war-related media production as a whole, for war-related fan productions it seems to hold true for fan-produced videos. They almost by definition present aspects of history that can evoke strong emotions among viewers, like pride, admiration or sympathy.

A partial explanation of this phenomenon is found in Stuart Fischhoff's study:

When an emotionally powerful visual track is combined with an emotionally expressive soundtrack, the heightening of affective meanings achieves an intensity that can produce a physiological response in spectators. (...) In this way, a well-conceived soundtrack can make an otherwise weak scene into a powerful emotional event. (2005, p. 19).

In other words, the combination of emotional music and visuals is a powerful means for evoking *kandō* among viewers. Fan-produced videos often use footage that was originally emotional (kamikaze farewells, civilians' struggles, and so on) and the ultimate goal of creators is emphasizing the emotionality of these scenes via editing and music. This is congruent with Jenkins' (2010) statement about videos being 'poetry', 'expressive' and 'concerned with feelings'.

Some empirical experiments (for example, Sirius and Clark 1994, Ellis and Simons 2005) have shown that the combination of audio and visuals affects viewers more than these elements separately, creating a synergetic relationship in terms of emotional response. Consequently, by combining visuals with a well-chosen music score, creators of fan videos can make their work appeal more strongly on an emotional level to the audience than the (already emotional) visuals did on their own. So, the *kandō* experience while watching a fan video based on a particular movie can be greater than while watching the movie itself because of the music. Song lyrics also add to the emotive nature. Whether it is a song composed by someone else or the creator's own

original composition, fan-creators usually choose songs in which both the music and lyrics fit the overall tone of their work. Lyrics, therefore, become an additional commentary to the video content or tell a whole new story in original compositions. The importance of lyrics is shown by the effort of many creators to include them in the video as subtitles, especially in the case of Vocaloid compositions, because the original lyrics cannot be checked by the audience elsewhere. Sad, romantic ballads or compositions full of pathos but somehow epic in nature are used to emphasize the nostalgically idealized, purified portrayal of wartime heroes.

Considering the emotionality of conservative narratives, it is not surprising that this form of fan-produced video is used mainly to present this type of content, even if it does not necessarily share values with extreme nationalism. The *kandō* present in most video fan productions, and especially Vocaloid compositions, supports the idealized image of Japan's past, but remains largely free of the revisionism that is characteristic of nationalists, and other phenomena such as xenophobia or hate speech. Although I will give an example of right-wing vidding, most of *kandō* narratives in fan videos conform to 'nostalgic pop nationalism', expressing great pride in the nation's past, but not suggesting creators' political engagement beyond video production.

### **Fanvids (MADs)**

Wartime events and aesthetics are widely seen in Japanese popular culture and are also used in fanvids, although not necessarily in exact historical context. Many titles or franchises have inspired fans to create fan productions in form of MADs. MADs related directly to the Asia-Pacific War can be divided into three basic types based on the footage they use.

The first one is a 'tribute' to a particular fictional work, whether a movie, manga, or TV-show, usually containing footage only from one specific production. After watching or reading a particular work, fans decide to edit it as a way of expressing their appreciation. Works that have generated fandoms and extensive vidder activity can be identified by browsing YouTube. They include animations such as *Hotaru no haka* (Grave of the fireflies) and *Za Kokupitto* (The Cockpit), and the movies *Otokotachi no Yamato* (Yamato), *Eien no Zero* (Eternal Zero) and *Merdeka 17805*. War-themed fanvids

can be found by searching particular tags naming fandoms or groups (for example, kamikaze), but also accidentally while looking for MADs to a certain song or by clicking on related videos suggested by YouTube or NicoNico Dōga. MADs can therefore help viewers to discover new fandoms and present new content to them.

Using manga scans or scenes from movies, vidders add visual effects and combine the scenes with a song of fitting tone. The content of the song does not need to be thematically related to the movie. Often the song in the MAD can obtain a new meaning because of the scenes it is associated with.

One such case is the song *Omoide yo arigatō* (Thank you, memories) performed by *enka* artist Shimazu Aya and written by Aku Yū. While searching for this song on YouTube in November 2016 the three most popular search results were war-related fanvids and several other fanvids were found further down among the search results. This song was first used in a war context by a user named AYACHANNEL100 in May 2013 in a kamikaze-themed video. The lyrics of the song do not contain war references, there is also no mention in the album CD notes that the song was originally written in any relation to war memories. Similar to many other *enka* ballads *Omoide yo arigatō* has a nostalgic tone. The persona in the lyrics gives thanks for everything he/she experienced in life, including all the pain and suffering, but most of all love. When set in a war context the song makes it seem as if soldiers (pilots) were ready to die for the greater cause, having accepted their fate after having lived and loved with their whole hearts.

Video 1 (as listed with all the details in Table 3) posted as *Omoide yo arigatō (Otokotachi no Yamato) Shimazu Aya cover by akinoitigo* (Thank you for the memories [Yamato] Shimazu Aya cover by akinoitigo) was set to the 2005 movie *Otokotachi no Yamato*, evoking sadness and deep sympathy for the soldiers who left their loved ones behind. The fanvid begins with a scene from the movie, showing the heartbreaking goodbye of a young sailor to his mother. When he walks away, she screams behind him with a shaking voice, forbidding him to die. That is when the first notes of *Omoide yo arigatō* start to play in the background. The crying mother embraces the boy among snowflakes falling slowly, the music rises, and the title of the movie is visible in the screen. The video is edited mainly with long cuts of battle scenes, which mix close-ups of soldiers' faces with shots of enemy planes and silhouettes. Flashbacks of a sailor's parting from his sister are accompanied by added on-screen text 'You swore to protect

me till the end. I prayed for you not to die'. The family scenes are followed by footage of soldiers dying in a hail of bullets and drowning in blood-colored waters as the *Yamato* is sinking. At the end viewers see a historical photograph of the burning battleship, with added information on the casualties and an expression of the vidder's sincere grief for the *eirei*. An additional indication of the vidder's emotional engagement is his own performance of the song. It is rare for vidders to use their own cover versions of songs, but akinoitigo took great care to express *kandō* through his emotional performance and movie editing, leaving viewers in no doubt that he was deeply moved by *Yamato's* fate.

In many cases, MADs present the storylines of the original productions and repeat their messages. Nevertheless, even though their creations result from the consumption of other pop cultural productions, vidders still filter the original work through their own perceptions. Itō Mizuko (2012) argues in the case of AMVs that:

Like fan fiction and fan art AMVs appropriate and reframe found materials, engaging in a critical practice of connoisseurship and interpretation by creating an incredibly diverse range of media works. In many cases, fan-created transformative works give voice to marginalized subjectivities and viewpoints and offer alternative interpretations of popular text (Itō 2012, pp. 287-288).

Consequently, the same movie can become source footage for multiple fanvids expressing different emotions, depending mostly on the impression the vidder had after watching the original and what aspects of the original production they want to emphasize.

This point becomes clear when comparing the sentimental *Otokotachi no Yamato* MAD presented above with one set to the song *Asu e no hōkō* by JAM Project, which was originally the theme song of the erotic PC game *Muv-Luv alternative* featuring giant robots. It became very popular among creators of action-MADs and was used in several war-themed fanvids, including *Otokotachi no Yamato*. Video 2 '*Otokotachi no Yamato x Asu e no hōkō (Hiroimono)*' is based on fast-paced editing and scenes are chosen to match the lyrics. When the lyrics call for soldiers to 'stand up', 'rise' 'get heated' 'get ready', there are scenes of soldiers getting ready to fight, saluting, engaging in combat. Lyrics about 'protecting the beloved land' are combined with images of rice fields and a young girl laughing with sailors, 'people's love is the sword of God' accompanies scenes

of mothers and sisters, and pictures of women and wounded are shown when soldiers are called to 'become shields of the weak'. Fast cuts following the rhythm of the song intensify the feelings of readiness, focus and determination that are supposed to be had by the soldiers portrayed and these feelings are transferred to viewers. The combination of video and song presents Japanese sailors as sacrificing themselves for the sake of their loved ones and building a happy, peaceful future through their heroic acts – a strongly conservative narrative. The viewers can feel pride in the soldiers' bravery and find themselves cheering for and supporting their fight.

Consequently, via their music choice and editing, the two vidders discussed have emphasized different aspects of the movie *Otokotachi no Yamato* and created videos eliciting different emotions: one is sadness and nostalgia, the other is pride, respect and admiration towards sailors. Still, neither of them criticizes the movie or presents a message that contradicts the original. They present two different aspects of conservative views on war history.

The second category of war-related fanvids is 'real history'-type MADs focusing on actual historical events. Here the vidder's inspiration comes not so much from consuming a particular work and wanting to comment on it, but rather from a general interest in the topic, and the ideological message is more actively created by the author. Creators seek out footage from various sources and can use different works of fiction centered on the theme as well as documentaries and photographs. War-themed MADs like this are dedicated to a certain event, like aerial battles, or groups like the navy or pilots. These works are a sort of 'nostalgic reminder' of the idealized past, but also carry a message concerning the present day, calling for gratitude towards soldiers who fought for the country and presenting them as role models for subsequent generations.

In a similar manner to mainstream productions, kamikaze pilots are an especially popular theme. MADs contain recordings of their farewells and takeoffs, accompanied by quotes from kamikaze letters together with the date and place where the pilot died. This demonstrates a degree of research carried out by MAD creators. A representative example of kamikaze-tribute MAD is Video 3, *Kamikaze tokkōtaiintachi no isho* (Last will of kamikaze unit members). In terms of visuals, this fanvid is constructed with historical footage (mainly long video shots and a few photographs slowly transitioning between each other) rather randomly put together, mainly as the background for added on-screen text. The song indicates the emotions that the vidder wants to evoke among

viewers (even though he may not necessarily be successful). The creator chose a romantic ballad *Kimi ga tame* (For your sake), performed by Suara, which originally featured in the *shōnen* anime series *Utawarerumono*. The song is just another nostalgic composition about missing a lover, but when combined with kamikaze pictures it can be easily understood as a farewell message from people heading towards death. Lyrics such as ‘If you’ll remember serenity, I will be there’ and ‘people will rot away someday, but they will become a song to be passed down through the times’ emphasize the pilots’ sacrifice and let viewers feel sadness and sympathy for the young pilots, who are portrayed as loving and innocent. The MAD also becomes a call to remember them.

While the use of war narratives in MADs varies from action-entertainment to sentimental, the general message remains consistently conservative. The videos are rooted in the literary genre of *hōganbiiki*, which emphasizes ‘the nobility of sacrificing to a losing cause’ and evokes an ‘aura of sentimentality around tales of futile suffering’, resulting in giving meaning to the deaths of young people in the war and remembering them with ‘a kind of self-indulgent pathos’ (Orr 2001, p. 11-12). What is emphasized in the videos is the purity of the soldiers’ spirit and the pride felt in their patriotism and precious sacrifice, which are arguments characterizing the attitudes of Japanese conservatives (Seaton 2007, p. 25).

Video 4, ‘[*Kōgashitsu furu MAD*] *Eien no 0 ONE OK ROCK FIGHT THE NIGHT new arubamu 35xxxv full film eternal zero*’ ([High resolution full MAD] *Eternal Zero ONE OK ROCK FIGHT THE NIGHT new album 35xxxv full film eternal zero*) created by ko ARA combines the 2013 kamikaze-themed blockbuster movie *Eien no Zero* with the song *Fight the night* by popular J-rock band One OK Rock. It has a strong favorable rating on YouTube, and as of January 2018 had reached over 13 million views<sup>xlvi</sup>. The MAD emphasizes the message of the movie itself and focuses on the tragedy of war and value of family bonds. Overlaying scenes of wartime Zero pilot Miyabe Kyūzō fighting and his grandson in present day Japan trying to find his place in life convey a message about the connection between generations and the meaning given to the troubled present by the lessons of the past. Ko ARA showed crashing planes and combat scenes when the song refers to ‘the price of war’, emphasizing loss of lives resulting from the conflict. The vidder also chose to combine recurring lyrics about ‘fight till we see another day’ with scenes of soldiers families, suggesting that soldiers’ ultimate motivations to keep fighting were thoughts of loved ones. In the two years after its upload viewers posted

over 1000 comments. The comments included calls to Yasukuni worship, explanations that kamikaze were necessary to protect the country, simple statements such as '*kandō shita*' and 'I can't stop crying', and statements about the strength of the anti-war message in the MAD. Overall, viewers responded to the video in a strongly positive way, and some interpreted the content as pacifistic. Conservative content in fanvids and anti-war sentiments among both the audience and creator are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Thus far I have identified fanvids presenting war narratives as either 'tribute' works or 'real history' narratives. The third type, which involves the direct political use of war references in MADs, is the 'ideological manifesto'. These are particularly favored by right-wing nationalists.

A creative example of an 'ideological manifesto video' is a variation on the opening of the anime *Shingeki no kyōjin* (Attack on Titan). This extremely popular anime premiered in 2013 and tells a story of humanity being almost wiped out by giant creatures called Titans. The survivors live behind a huge wall and struggle to survive Titans' attacks. A user called *suidajapan* created Video 5 called *[MAD] Shingeki no kōkoku* (Attack on Japan), inspired by the opening sequence of *Shingeki no kyōjin*. The creator substituted Japan for humanity and white people for Titans. *Suidajapan* left the original voiceover from the anime opening, introducing the story about how 'over one hundred years ago, humanity faced a new enemy. Because of the enemy's superior power, humanity found itself at the edge of extinction.' However, instead of images of Titans, there are pictures of Meiji-era art, photographs of present day politicians, Yasukuni Shrine and Emperors of Japan, and videos of kamikaze pilots, Imperial Army soldiers, Zero fighters, and the Japan Self-Defense Force. The subtitles state the 'scenario was written by Japanese history' and generates feelings of danger and tension. The vidder has created an analogy with the struggle of the (human) Japanese Empire against the (Titan) Western powers, while also portraying other Asian countries in a critical manner. Pictures of China's President Xi Jinping and North Korea's supreme leader Kim Jong-un are shown to the lyrics about 'pigs who laugh at people willing to move ahead'. The message is that Japan should go against the pressure of Western countries and Asian neighbors and restore its army. Japanese should express patriotism at Yasukuni Shrine, worship the Emperor and to have pride in the country's past. By referring in form and content to a popular recent anime, *Shingeki no kōkoku* is easily stumbled upon

by unsuspecting users looking for content related to the anime *Shingeki no kyōjin*. The video presents nationalistic views on war history and right-wing political engagement.

Videos actively promoting right wing ideology can focus on war history or just refer to it to evoke patriotic feelings and comment on present issues. Both historical and modern real life video footage is used, usually combined with long on-screen texts presenting the authors' political and ideological views. Internet right-wingers (*netto uyoku*) are active users of video sharing sites. NicoNico Dōga has a reputation for being a strongly conservative environment (Manabe 2015, p. 146) and based on my observations of YouTube, progressive content (for example, promotional videos of SEALDs, a student activists organization protesting particularly against legal changes concerning Japan Self-Defense Force in 2015) gets negative ratings, while conservative and nationalistic videos gain favorable ratings. Also nationalistic videos depicting war history greatly outnumber videos depicting Japan's war responsibility (I have discovered none using footage from movies that can be considered progressive, like *Kyatapirā* [Caterpillar, 2010] or *Nobi* [Fires on the plain, 2014] during my extensive Internet searches). This confirms the trend noticed a decade ago by Takahara Motoaki that the Internet is drifting right (2006, p. 90). The often aggressive rhetoric of Internet right-wingers is consistent with research concerning the online environment, which indicates that harsher statements and more extreme behaviors are often more possible online than offline. Online abuse can be anonymous, while the lack of non-verbal feedback from the abused mitigates possible empathy with the group being abused (cf. Suler 2004). While progressives tend to engage more actively in offline politics, *netto uyoku* dominate cyberspace and are active online in supporting conservative narratives and criticizing progressive ones.

In summary, the first two types of fanvid reflect the creator's devotion to a certain work or historical narrative. The third category of video uses similar editing techniques combining music and video, but relies heavily on added text. Videos in this third category try more to convince the viewer to agree with certain arguments rather than simply *feel* something. Creating nationalistic ideological manifestos in the form of MADs requires a right-wing worldview, but feeling touched by a conservative movie and making an emotionally corresponding MAD arguably does not. Therefore, the third category is clearly related to nationalism and rightist views that are rooted in political involvement in the topic. The first two types of MAD can be seen in many cases as

representative of ‘nostalgic pop nationalism’, based on emotional reactions towards certain conservative narratives.

## Vocaloid compositions

Some videos uploaded to NicoNico Dōga or YouTube are Vocaloid songs accompanied by visuals. Vocaloid songs and videos vary in terms of quality. Some are produced by advanced users (both individuals and small groups) and accompanied by professional-quality music videos featuring original animations, while others are made by less experienced users and have just a simple still background showing the lyrics. This variety in quality is reflected in the number of views. Some songs attract only a few hundred views, while the most popular get tens of millions<sup>xlix</sup>. Among the large number of Vocaloid songs there are war-related songs, too. Vocaloid can be used to create both cover versions of existing songs and original songs. I will focus on the latter, although Hiroshima-themed songs and wartime *gunka* (military songs) are often covered using Vocaloid software.

In contrast to many vidders, Vocaloid composers make their own original works from scratch, without reusing third-party footage. This does not mean that songs lack a clear inspiration. As will be discussed later, composers use various external influences, which are reflected in the themes they touch upon in their works. There are three main topics that seem to inspire Vocaloid creators most.

The most popular is probably the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While vidders do not seem keen on using footage from fictional or documentary works depicting nuclear bombing, these events encourage great creativity among Vocaloid composers. However, although these compositions are numerous, they are produced by less popular creators and the number of views is typically limited to a few thousand. Numerous compositions depict the morning when the A-bomb fell on Hiroshima (Nagasaki receives considerably less attention) and the aftermath of the explosion. Some describe the events in a lyrical, poetic way; some have original perspectives beyond the new music, such as Video 6, posted as [*Hatsune Miku*] *Noraneko no uta nyao Hiroshima* [*Hiroshima no ano sangeki no nichiji wo oshiete kudasai*] ([Hatsune Miku] Stray cat’s song meow Hiroshima [Please tell me about this tragic time of Hiroshima])

which is about a stray cat present in Hiroshima at the time of bombing. It wanders around the destroyed city, crying for the dead and desperately looking for food with human survivors, and it prays for the victims with other cats on the anniversary of the bombing.

Other compositions describe victims' suffering and the effects of radiation much more precisely, with graphic and literal images. One example is Video 7, *Boku wa kakuheiki da (No more hibakusha)* (I am a nuclear weapon [No more hibakusha]) by Ken Tamayan. The song is written from the perspective of the atomic bomb. The bomb asks Hiroshima and Nagasaki to tell the story about the people it killed, the pain caused by radiation, the mountains of corpses, the boys and girls with glass stuck in their bodies or peeled off skin, and the burned people looking for water. This graphic depiction becomes even more drastic in combination with the music. The artificially childish voice of the Vocaloid and music bring to mind an old amusement park (the music video also shows carousels at some point). It seems more appropriate for a music box than a story about the atomic bomb, but the style seems to make the song's impact on listeners even stronger. *Boku wa kakuheiki da* is one of several Vocaloid songs that hit the audience with very explicit descriptions of physical harm caused by nuclear weapons, which are usually avoided in mainstream Hiroshima songs.

Many A-bomb-themed Vocaloid compositions were originally uploaded to NicoNico Dōga at the end of July and beginning of August, around the anniversaries of the bombings. These compositions are far from being nationalistic glorification of war heroes, but they embody the feeling of *kandō* by presenting the undeserved suffering of civilians. Created as a tribute to Japanese victimhood, they also present an anti-war statement. This view fits into the conservative framework, as John Dower explained:

Hiroshima and Nagasaki became icons of Japanese suffering—perverse national treasures, of a sort, capable of fixating Japanese memory of the war on what had happened to Japan and simultaneously blotting out recollection of the Japanese victimization of others. Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that is, easily became a way of forgetting Nanking, Bataan, the Burma-Siam railway, Manila, and the countless Japanese atrocities these and other place names signified to non-Japanese (Dower 2014, p. 144).

Focus on Japanese victimhood is therefore far from being a progressive stance, but it is also not nationalistic rhetoric. The current far right aims at the country's remilitarization and supports the idea of sacrifice for the state and development of nuclear weapons (cf. Penney 2012). It has its own take on the atomic bombings, which is different from the one presented by *hibakusha* groups, who are actively supporting nuclear weapons ban (NHK 2017). Pacifistic messages framed within Japanese civilian suffering remain part of the conservative worldview, but remains distinctive from nationalism and politically engaged right-wing. It is one of the elements showing most clearly that the position of conservative online fan creators cannot be equated with nationalism.

The second big theme that Vocaloid composers address is kamikaze sacrifice. Kamikaze-themed compositions tend to reflect the representations in fanvids discussed above. Pilots are presented as brave, noble young people willing to sacrifice their lives to protect the country and their loved ones. Vocaloid users often present the tragic fate of kamikaze in the form of a short story, often involving the trope of lovers separated by death. This standardized narrative reflects mainstream kamikaze-themed productions, a genre that became significant in the middle of the 1950s and continued to the 1970s. Pacifistic in tone, these movies explored volunteer sacrifice and the meaning of brotherhood (Standish 2006, p. 184), and introduced female characters mainly to emphasize soldiers' sacrifice (Standish 2006, p. 194). Revived in the 2000s with several highly successful productions (*Hotaru* [2001], *Ore wa, kimi no tame ni koso shini ni iku* [2007], *Eien no Zero* [2013]), kamikaze movies are still characterized by standardized, highly emotional narratives. Even if mainstream productions are currently not so numerous, they provide popular material for MAD creators and vivid inspiration for Vocaloid composers, who willingly reflect the narratives and emotions present in mainstream productions in their own works.

The last kamikaze-themed anime was produced in 1993 (*Za Kokupitto*), and fan productions are currently filling the gap of *tokkōtai* stories in anime aesthetics. A popular, professional-looking example of such content is Video 8 created by Team Kamiuta. This successful Vocaloid creator group became so popular that it now publishes its own CDs, sells songs on iTunes, and even has some of them available in karaoke boxes, although all the songs and videos are still available for free on the

Internet.<sup>1</sup> As such, the group's activity fits into the framework of fan production, like most other Vocaloid (and all MAD) works.

Contrary to many fan art and *dōjinshi* creators, most Vocaloid composers are not aspiring professionals, but primarily 'fans'. This gives them relatively bigger creative freedom, in which expressing oneself is more important than commercial breakout. Video 8 [Eng Sub] *The vastness of the hereafter is within this fluorescence* [Nekomura Iroha & VY2] tells the story of childhood sweethearts during the war. Sung almost fully from girl's perspective, the song follows the couple's relationship as the boy becomes a fighter pilot. The girl is heartbroken because of their separation and the danger he encounters, but also very dedicated and proud, knowing she must endure every struggle for the sake of victory. The boy is eventually deployed on a suicide mission, leaving a message not to cry over him because what they shared gave him happiness. This catchy song with an aesthetically pleasing anime-style video combines various narrative clichés, but in its under 4 minutes of music manages to provide a *kandō* experience to both Japanese and international audiences, as the emotional comments under the English-subbed version of the video suggest.

Members of Team Kamiuta seem to have a particular interest in war history, since they have produced at least one more war-themed song, which is dedicated to the battleship *Yamato*. Video 9 *Kochira Yamato, anata ni tsugu/Chiimu Kamiuta* (Here is Yamato, sending a message/ Team Kamiuta) has a strongly conservative tone both musically and visually. In contrast to the previous video (Video 8), *Kochira Yamato* lacks storyline and focuses on glorification of the battleship. The one 'whose name is unsinkable' is presented as the leader of *tokkō* attacks, fiercely attacking the enemy and going down with the grace of cherry blossom. Both war-themed works of team Kamiuta are conservative in tone and use nationalist symbols (like the Rising Sun Flag). Despite this tone in the lyrics and visuals, a representative of Team Kamiuta told the author that rather than offering viewers a particular ideological message, his goal was to encourage a general interest in the war, which is supposed to result in further personal research by viewers. Also when asked about criticisms of the video (especially from Koreans) on NicoNico Dōga and YouTube, the creator explained that these voices can inform Japanese viewers about the past, so disabling comments would deprive other viewers a chance to learn about other perspective on war history. He also added that everyone is entitled to their own opinion on the video, and one person's comments can be

informative for others with different views (Ueda 2014). Despite this statement, many comments below the video simply describe the tears the song brought to the viewers' eyes and the *kandō* they experienced, while other commenters engage in heated ideological debate, often involving abusive language. In the case of Team Kamiuta there is a visible gap between the creator's stated intentions and the narrative presented in the compositions. However, the descriptions of other war-themed Vocaloid compositions on NicoNico Dōga seen by the author suggest that some composers clearly mean to express their personal views and spread the idea of eternal gratefulness towards fallen war heroes via their songs.

One more kamikaze-themed Vocaloid song needs to be mentioned, namely Video 10, [VOCALOID Original] *Yakusoku no oka – Tokkōtai ni sasageru uta – KAMIKAZE* (Promised land – song dedicated to kamikaze) created by Takemaru. In visual terms it is simplistic. It uses a few archival pictures of kamikaze with moving lights resembling fireflies over them, and anime-style graphics of Yasukuni Shrine visited by a young girl. First she stands in the dark, in the snow. Later night turns into the day and winter into spring, as the shrine becomes surrounded by cherry blossom. The lyrics tell the story of pilots fighting bravely to protect their loved ones and believing that they will meet after honorable death in the 'promised land' of Yasukuni Shrine. By stating that Yasukuni must be visited in spring, the composition refers directly to the portrayal of 'cadets as scattering like falling cherry blossom that would be reborn as blooming cherry blossoms at the Yasukuni Shrine, where the Emperor would pay homage' (Ohnuki-Tierney 2002, p. 109). Several popular wartime songs presented cherry blossoms as embodied souls of fallen soldiers (Ohnuki-Tierney 2002, pp. 138-141) and aestheticized militarism. Fucks (2016) noted in the discussion concerning mainstream right-wing rock in Japan that the symbol *wakazakura* (young cherry blossom) is particularly important in this music genre. It supports the identification of primarily young audience with kamikaze, who usually died young, and 'youth's bravado, national pride and heroism' (2016, pp. 55). *Yakusoku no oka* uses the same rhetoric as many mainstream nationalistic songs. It glorifies soldiers of Imperial Japan and supports Yasukuni worship as an expression of gratitude towards them.

Finally, there are some Vocaloid compositions depicting the terrors of war, but only with a vague and general reference to World War II or Japan. They emphasize how harmful war is both for civilians and for soldiers. The fate of soldiers was presented by

the group Artificial Monochrome in Video 11, [*Hatsune Miku, Megurine Luka*] 「1/6000000」 ~English Subbed~ [*Vocaloid PV*]. Sixty million refers to the number of World War II casualties. The music video combines archival footage from the European front with animation of Hatsune Miku fighting as a soldier. The songs depicts the hardships of war the soldiers have to go through: fear, physical pain, dehumanization of enemy, loss of friends and ‘countless flower petals picked one by one with [one’s] fingertips’, symbolizing the blood of people who have been killed. While the song tells about World War II, the music video sets it on the European rather than Asian front and has pictures of Nazis and Berlin burning. The main part of music video shows the character of Hatsune Miku in uniform and with a rifle aiming at soldiers’ silhouettes and red flowers appearing in the sight of her gun. As the creators explained to the author, they aimed to present the fate of one particular soldier during World War II, but instead of using a ‘nameless face’ they decided to use Miku, a character to which many viewers feel immediate attachment (Yaijiro 2014). These videos are far from war glorification, and present war as harmful on different levels. They go beyond national perspectives and are rooted in an emotional condemnation of war. Lack of national perspective distances them from any ideological stand on the war history and focuses attention on the powerful anti-war message.

In all these videos, the songs are written from a personal perspective and engage the viewer through the combination of story, lyrics and images. Composers use pop cultural references like the character of Hatsune Miku and general manga-style aesthetics to catch the attention of the average young, entertainment-seeking user of video-sharing platforms and to direct their interests towards the historical issues the creators value as important. Even though there are no limits to the themes composers could chose, the most popular ones – the A-bombs, kamikaze and general tragedy of war – reflect issues that are discussed in Japanese mainstream media and in commercial productions. In this sense, Vocaloid compositions also can be seen as derivative works, although not belonging to a particular fandom, but broadly rooted in Japanese cultural memory.

**‘To make them think...’**

I reached out to twelve creators (three vidders and nine Vocaloid creators) to ask about their reasons for producing the videos. Where an e-mail address was available, I contacted them via e-mail. For other creators, I left messages on video uploading sites. I received five replies, all from Vocaloid users. Four of them discussed their activities in e-mail correspondence and one agreed to a Skype interview. While vidders expressing the most conservative views in their works did not reply, the answers given by Vocaloid creators presented an overview of motivations to write war-themed compositions and share them online. For Ken Tamayan, creator of Video 7, *Boku wa kakuheiki da (No more hibakusha)* the greatest inspiration turned out to be the 1982 American documentary *The atomic café*, made using archival material from the 1940s to 1960s. The documentary presented some of the positive nuclear propaganda of the era and shocked Tamayan with its optimism, especially in contrast with the gruesome results of the bombing he had learned while visiting memory sites in Hiroshima. In his work he aimed to raise awareness of the consequences of nuclear power and to prevent 'nuclear enthusiasm' similar to American enthusiasm as seen in *The atomic café* (Tamayan 2014).

Yajiro, the lyrics writer for *1/60000000* (Video 11), mentioned reading a book where the statistic was given that World War II took the lives of 2% of the population at the time. This number, when combined with her grandparents' stories about friends and relatives who died during the war, made her realize the scale of human tragedy during the war, and she wanted to share this realization with others (Yajiro 2014). Ueda from Team Kamiuta, (Videos 8 and 9), whose motivations have already been partially discussed, was mostly inspired by the war experiences his grandmother shared with him (Ueda 2014). Finally, Takemaru, the author of the most conservative composition (Video 10) among the ones created by Vocaloid users who replied to my message, said his inspiration was rooted in his political interests and consequent interest in the Great East Asia War (*Daitōa sensō*, the name used in Japan during the war, 1941-1945, and now used by nationalists). He wanted to share Japanese history as he sees it in the form that he feels best at producing – Vocaloid composition. Takemaru believes that the meaning of kamikaze sacrifice was to save Japan's honor, and despite losing the war, Japanese can always be proud of having such heroes as their ancestors (Takemaru 2016). Ueda and Takemaru (Videos 8 and 10) also created kamikaze-themed songs, but they differed regarding the background of their works. Ueda openly discussed Japanese

war responsibility issues, but Takemaru expressed nationalistic attitudes. However, this difference is not visible just by watching their works.

Despite these various sources of inspiration (books, family stories, memory sites, movies, political investment), the goal of all these vidders was basically the same: they wanted to make viewers think about certain issues in a certain way. They became interested and emotionally involved in a historical issue, and then decided to create their own representation of the past to make the audience think (*kangaesaseru*) about matters that are (presumably) not discussed enough. This point was most broadly developed by Ueda, who claimed that the Vocaloid format and uploads to NicoNico Dōga are perfect for his purposes. He said he wants to spread awareness of the war mainly among young people, who have the most limited knowledge of the past, and Vocaloid compositions can generate discussion and desire to learn more about the topic.

It is hard to judge viewers' reactions based solely on comments left under the videos. Overall, the available statements suggest that in many cases war-themed works made audience *feel* rather than *think*. There are numerous comments about *kandō* and tears caused by the narratives under almost all war-themed fan produced videos. After watching a kamikaze-MAD, however, some viewers will write about the wrongness of any war. Others, meanwhile, write about Japanese pride and the beauty of Yasukuni Shrine worship. And others write about Japanese war crimes and rightist propaganda. The response varies according to personal beliefs and the emotions evoked by the video. As demonstrated by Ueda, creators' intentions are not always clearly visible in their works, and the reception also varies depending on the viewer. Given that the lyrics are in Japanese and the stories are told from Japanese perspectives, it can be assumed that most viewers are Japanese. But sometimes comments are written in Korean, Chinese and English, and a few works (especially these emphasizing pacifistic messages) were subtitled in English, suggesting an international target audience. Non-Japanese commentators expressed critical opinions on Japanese war history more often, heating up the discussion in the comments section.

Despite the diverse views of creators, they are unified in their representation of an idealized past. Many videos exhibit nostalgia for an era of pure-hearted heroes or a society where people were ready to sacrifice everything for their ideals. This longing for heroism and high values is visible in many fan-produced videos, especially those with a kamikaze theme. This issue was articulated by Takemaru, who asked rhetorically, 'How

many of today's Japanese live fully (*isshōkenmei*)? Haven't many of them lost the spiritual virtues of the war generation?' (Takemaru 2016). This problem of the 'degeneration of Japanese people' (Kaihara 2009, pp. 342-346) is broadly discussed by Japanese conservatives. In this sense, all of the videos discussed remain within the frame of the conservative worldview. They present characters that the audience can admire or/and sympathize with: separated lovers, soldiers fighting till the end, and pilots dying for their loved ones. Such tropes evoke strong emotional responses among viewers, and positive portrayals of these imagined characters suggest they should be seen as role models for present-day society.

Whereas viewer comments have been discussed throughout the chapter, another element of audience reception is the raw numbers of people watching the videos. Table 3 presents the total number of views from YouTube and NicoNico Dōga for the videos discussed in this chapter:

No.	Title	Theme	Views [total] as of 2017/12 /03 <sup>ii</sup>	Earliest upload date	Avg. views per day
1.	<u><i>Omoide yo arigatō</i></u>	Otokotachi no Yamato MAD	58,396	6 February 2015	57
2.	<u><i>Otokotachi no Yamato x Asu e no hōkō</i></u>	Otokotachi no Yamato MAD	15,502	2 July 2014	12
3.	<u><i>Kamikaze tokkōtaiintachi no isho</i></u>	Kamikaze tribute MAD	2,514,198	6 April 2008	713
4.	<u><i>Eien no Zero ONE OK ROCK FIGHT THE NIGHT</i></u>	Eien no Zero MAD	13,081,75 6	3 April 2015	12,965
5.	<u><i>Shingeki no kōkoku</i></u>	Historical MAD	235,769	13 May 2013	142
6.	<u><i>Noraneke no uta nyao Hiroshima</i></u>	Hiroshima Vocaloid	637	26 July 2015	0.7

7.	<u><i>Boku wa kakuheiki da!</i></u> <u><i>(No more hibakusha!)</i></u>	Hiroshima Vocaloid	No data	9 August 2009	No data
8.	<i>[Eng Sub] The vastness of the hereafter is within this fluorescence</i> <i>[Nekomura Iroha &amp; VY2]</i>	Kamikaze Vocaloid	890,371	20 October 2012	476
9.	<u><i>Kochira Yamato, anata ni tsugu</i></u>	Battleship Yamato Vocaloid	565,904	7 April 2015	582
10.	<u><i>Yakusoku no oka – tokkōtai ni sasageru uta</i></u>	Kamikaze Vocaloid	4,253	11 February 2015	4
11.	<u><i>1/60000000</i></u>	Solders' struggle Vocaloid	42,029	6 April 2010	15

**Table 3 Data of analyzed video fan productions**

As can be seen, the videos vary greatly in terms of access rates. MADs using more popular songs or Vocaloid compositions created by already largely popular groups have more chance of being discovered by viewers. The raw data indicates that war-themed videos are widely watched on the Internet and get millions of views on aggregate. Different creators enjoy different levels of popularity, but vidders clearly have a voice that cannot be ignored.

## Conclusions

In this chapter I have analyzed two major forms of fan production referring to war history. They are both created non-commercially at home with computer software by individuals or small groups. Both forms rely heavily on music and are distributed mainly via the same Internet platforms, NicoNico Dōga and YouTube. The vast majority of videos are not directly related to the real-life political activism of their creators. War-related content is generated as a hobby and is inspired by the consumption of other media. MADs are derivative works from mainstream productions and Vocaloid songs are

fans' original compositions. MADs result from devotion to a particular war-themed (semi-)fictional work, express fascination with a specific aspect of (romanticized) war history, and use both war and pop culture references to express certain ideological (mainly conservative) messages with the aim of spreading those views among viewers. Both the music and visuals of Vocaloid compositions are made from scratch by fans, but they still reflect what their creators consume as users of mainstream popular culture and the views that were presented to them by family and society.

Although the Internet gives creators anonymity and freedom of speech, most fan-produced videos vary in tone from conservative to nationalistic, presenting different aspects of what can be categorized under these definitions. Combining music and visuals, these videos are a highly emotional form, created as an entertaining activity of fans sharing their own 'feel good/feel moved' experience condensed into video. These feelings are strongly related to conservative narratives of sacrifice and victimhood. MADs emphasize heroism of kamikaze and the army, while Vocaloid videos focus mainly on kamikaze and the sufferings of *hibakusha*. Deep emotions evoked by these narratives can often be summarized in one word, *kandō*. Viewers are presented with a nostalgic vision of the past, where brave, noble, young and beautiful people sacrifice personal happiness for the greater good. This is a past one can be proud of, and these are role models one can follow. In this way, *kandō* can be perceived as a tool for promoting conservative ideology rooted in the imagined past.

By producing and sharing romanticized visions of the past via fan productions, Japanese youth creates an emotionally involved community of people touched by the (fictionalized) past they share. Historical accuracy is not the main issue here. It is the emotional response that fan creators experienced and decided to share that justifies the use of war narratives. However, reaching for conservative war discourse should not be treated as clear proof of nationalism and right-leaning ideology among all video creators, as their intentions can be less obvious than the video itself seems to suggest. Most are not involved in nationalistic historical revisionism or aggressive right-wing political activism, despite the shared nostalgia for the past. Young people express through *kandō* narratives not only a yearning for pride in their history, but also hope for peace, dedication to friends and family above devotion to the state, and other elements inconsistent with nationalist rhetoric. Furthermore, to what extent emotions influence or reflect the historical consciousness of the viewers requires further research. What

war-themed fan-produced videos indicate, however, is the relationship between an emotional *kandō* experience, nostalgia and conservatism. An idealized past that touches the viewer is also a past that viewers can be proud of – as it should be according to conservatives.

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<sup>xliii</sup> For extensive comment on the relationship between Crypton’s PiaPro license and expansion of derivative works see Hernandez Hernandez (2017, p. 120-155).

<sup>xliv</sup> Action/adventure story of a swordsman in the Meiji era.

<sup>xlv</sup> I did a keyword search, looking for tags like ‘war’, ‘Asia-Pacific War’, ‘Great East Asia War’, ‘World War II’ etc. combined with ‘MAD’, ‘Vocaloid’. I also used titles of war-related Japanese movies from the last two decades and names of popular Vocaloids. I followed related videos suggested by the sites, watched users playlists, and also used a general Google search that directed me to Yahoo!Chiebukuro pages recommending war-related productions.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Although there are many commentaries concerning these issues, none of them can be defined as ‘fan productions’.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Although this paper focuses on Asia-Pacific War representation in fan productions, ‘feel good’ narratives within a military context are not limited to past events. There are numerous, popular fanvids focusing on the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF). This requires a separate study into the modern military fantasies of Japanese fan creators. These fanvids express and evoke pride and admiration towards JSDF by emphasizing dedication, heroism and sacrifice, using long action sequences set to vivid rock music (sometimes the same songs as in war-themed videos). Despite portraying different events and eras, they evoke the same *kandō* as war-themed video fan productions, using very similar aesthetics.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Three million views of these were generated in only five months, from January to June 2017. YouTube’s algorithm tends to recommend to viewers the most popular videos in a category. Consequently, once a video already stands out in the number of views, perhaps because of a vidder’s popularity or the use of a popular song, it will very quickly gain further views. Video 4 can be found among top three results when searching for the song *Fight for the night*, so it is easily discovered by people not looking for war-related content. Viewing numbers, therefore, reflect the consumption of the video, but not necessarily the active demand for this type of content.

<sup>xlix</sup> In comparison with most popular Vocaloid songs, even the popular war-themed ones remain marginal with half a million views. War-themed MADs can be discovered because of the popularity of movie or song they use. In the case of Vocaloid original compositions, viewers often click on seemingly high-quality videos or works of already established creators. As a result,

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Vocaloid songs more often get views because of their quality rather than content, even though they are sometimes recommended on dedicated blogs or Internet forums. The most popular war-themed Vocaloid songs, therefore, have not necessarily gained popularity because their message is appealing to viewers.

<sup>l</sup> More information about the group is available on their official website: <http://www.teamkamiuta.com/>

<sup>li</sup> Although most videos I have discussed were uploaded to NicoNico Dōga first, I used URLs of the reuploads on YouTube because YouTube does not require viewer registration. The table presents total number of views from both platforms.

## Chapter 6

### Military cosplay in Japan

Fans of manga, anime, games, comic books, fantasy and science fiction gather at fan conventions all over the world to celebrate their hobbies. One of the biggest attractions during conventions is cosplay. The term 'cosplay' combines the words 'costume' and 'play' and was first used by Takahashi Nobuyuki in a 1984 article published after he attended the World Con Science Fiction convention in Los Angeles (Bruno 2002). He saw cosplayers (fans participating in cosplay) dressing up as their favorite characters, usually from a popular culture franchise. The practice is deeply rooted in the category of fan production, as Lamerichs (2011, sec. 1.2) stated:

Fan costumes are just one example of how fans express their appreciation of existing stories and rework them through various media. Like fan fiction, fan movies, and fan art, cosplay motivates fans to closely interpret existing texts, perform them, and extend them with their own narratives and ideas.

I define cosplay as *the practice of wearing a costume of a character, whether fictional or historical, for the purpose of presenting it to an audience either online or during an event*. With the same purpose of presentation, cosplayers can also combine elements of visual styles that do not fit their everyday fashion sense, but are used to create a certain overall impression on the audience. 'Original cosplay' does not present a specific character, but often refers in a creative way to a general category, like 'monsters', 'robots', 'erotic' or 'military'. Wearing a particular outfit is not enough to call oneself a cosplayer because the practice also requires acting skills. Cosplayers perform roles and impersonate their chosen characters through their facial expressions, body positions, movements and language. Cosplay does not have to be, but often is, associated with Japanese culture.



**Figure 6 Military cosplayers at Comiket 90, Tokyo, August 2016.**

In Chapter 3, I discussed the major fan culture events, Comiket. It is not only a *dōjinshi* fair, but also a major cosplay event. Most of the cosplayers wear costumes of anime and games related characters, but other types of outfits can also be observed. While attending Comiket 90, I encountered several military cosplayers (Fig. 6). Continuing the fieldwork, I visited also Yasukuni Shrine on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the war's end. Among the Shrine visitors there were several people wearing Imperial Japanese Army and Navy uniforms, and one wearing a Nazi uniform. In this chapter I will focus on this practice of 'military cosplay' (*gunsō kosupure*) observed both during Comiket and in Yasukuni Shrine. By comparing Imperial Japanese Army/Navy and Nazi cosplay, I will discuss the motivations for engaging in such practice, which range from pure visual attraction to the uniforms through to nationalistic ideological involvement in war debates.

### **Cosplay in academic discourse**

The growing popularity of cosplay has attracted the attention of scholars. It remains a complex practice playing different roles for the fandom. Ellen Kirkpatrick

suggested that cosplayers 'participate in several fan practices simultaneously: they may write and perform skits at conventions or pose and perform for photographs, they often create, design, and manufacture their costumes, and they rewrite and perform their chosen character upon their own bodies' (2015, sec. 3.2). There are also diverse motivations for engaging in cosplay (Kirkpatrick 2015, sec. 3.4, Lamerichs 2015). Consequently, cosplay has been analyzed from various perspectives: cultural, sociological, psychological, gender, artistic, and nostalgic. These perspectives are all relevant to discussion of military cosplay, which also involves the cosplayer's political and ideological engagement.

First, some have analyzed cultural differences between cosplay performance at Western (European and North American) and Japanese conventions. As Winge (2006) and Ogonoski (2014) noticed, there is more 'role-play' in Western cosplay practice. Cosplayers go on stage, often in small groups, to enact a scene or sketch, which may take from a few minutes to an hour and include dancing, singing or martial arts. Such performance may also create new narratives just like fan fiction (Lamerichs 2011). By contrast, Japanese cosplay (as discussed in this chapter) focuses rather on static posing. Cosplayers have a few minutes to pose for pictures, often in the pose most characteristic for the character they are impersonating, or to say their motto-phrase.

From a sociological perspective, Winge (2006, pp. 68-69) noted that one of the main characteristics of cosplay is its social setting. Spectators are essential elements of cosplay. The audience legitimizes cosplay, whether during conventions or on dedicated Internet platforms. Consequently, cosplay is a social activity. Lunning (2011, p. 84) pointed out that cosplay is always a group activity, and '[c]osplaying starts with the desire to find community for the abject individual'. Social networking is central to cosplay events, where the simple fact of being present means belonging to fan community. Bainbridge and Norris (2013, sec. 32), based on newspaper interviews with an Australian cosplayer group, conclude that 'being a cosplayer was seen as a social, community-based activity, where the love and enjoyment of cosplaying as a pop culture character is aligned with a support base of family, friends and fellow fans to realize the cosplay identity'. They also noted 'cosplay's transversal moment as it crosses gender, race or reality can be seen to offer an optimistic creative and social moment' (sec. 35). While the cosplay community might not be as supportive and free of judgment on

occasions, overall cosplay is a social activity and the feeling of belonging seems important to cosplayers worldwide.

The psychological aspects of cosplay relate to the cosplayer's self-identity. Cosplay can be seen as reaffirmation and expression of cosplayer's *self* (*jibunrashisa*), when 'the goal of masquerade is to become oneself by becoming someone else' (Narumi 2009, p. 16). In addition to being members of a community, cosplayers identify themselves as individuals through their cosplay practice. Rahman *et al.* (2012, p. 334) called cosplay 'an identity marker, a visual art form that transforms an individual's identity through the reproduction of an idealized character.' In this form of self-expression cosplayers can become people/characters distinct physically and psychologically from those that they are in real life and then after their performances revert to their regular, 'ordinary' lives. Lamerichs (2011, sec. 5.4) also emphasized this transformative aspect:

Thus, when we speak of identity and identification in cosplay, we speak of two things. On the one hand, players actualize a narrative and its meaning; on the other hand, they actualize their own identities. To put it bluntly, by stating that a narrative or character is related to me—that I can identify with this particular story or person—I make a statement about myself. There is transformative potential in this ability to express who we are through fiction.

A vital part of cosplayers' character choice is their identification and fascination with the character. However, cosplay does not necessarily come down to finding the cosplayer's fictional 'alter ego'. In her 2015 study, Lamerichs tracked the 'affective process' of gaming cosplayers – 'a range of emotional experiences that can lead to investments in the world through which we constitute our identity' (p. 104), a process that can have different entry points. Some cosplayers do not really know the game, but enjoy the characters' design. Others might not have played it, but know the narrative from other sources, or enjoy the whole franchise in general. Cosplayers can be motivated to play the game after they started cosplaying as a particular character. Some of Lamerichs' interviewees suggested that they chose the character because they wanted to get to know him/her (2015, p. 108). Some cosplayers chose the character because of similar bodily posture, size, attitude, ethnicity, and gender, or because of the

aesthetics of the outfit. The process of cosplay preparation generated their investment in the character, but not in the narrative. Still, the practice is for them a means of self-expression and constitutes an important part of their identity.

Gender is another aspect broadly discussed in relation to identity and performativity in cosplay. Lunning (2011, pp. 78-85) has analyzed drag in cosplay. For Lunning, even a female cosplayer impersonation of a female character is considered drag, as it is not about the cosplayer *being* female, but *playing the role* of a female. Performance and perfected imitation are inseparable cosplay aspects. This is an important point especially when discussing 'crossplay', the act of dressing up as a character of the opposite sex. In many countries it is a popular form of cosplaying, in both male-to-female and female-to-male patterns. Lamerichs (2011, sec. 3.5) discussed various reasons for crossplay:

Crossplay can be only an occasional practice, enacted because the player likes a certain character of the opposite gender; it can be part of a parody (e.g., Man-Faye; Sailor Bubba); it can be motivated by a player's preference for a certain outfit despite the gender of the character. Some crossplayers enjoy the challenge of behaving like a member of a different gender, while others see themselves as publicly declaring the fluidity of gender. Additionally, crossplayers choose their characters according to more than merely gender.

In her study of male crossdressers, Rachel Leng (2013) pointed out that cosplay provides space for exploring sexuality, while the bodily performance of cosplayers can redefine gender roles and stereotypes. Cosplay was also connected to drag by the way crossplayers can play with their own gender identity, enacting identities created by popular culture as aesthetic practice (cf. Bainbridge and Norris 2013). Crossplayers can face performance restrictions during events, especially in Japan. Sometimes crossplay is forbidden, and in other cases only females are allowed to crossdress (Hoff 2012, p. 163). Many female cosplayers chose to impersonate males, as during events about 70-80% of cosplayers impersonate male characters (*dansō kosupure*) (Tanaka 2012, p. 248). Stockburger (2012) also explored the notion of mimicry as 'perfect cosplay' in the light of crossplay. He emphasized the great attention cosplayers give to maximizing the

accuracy of their performances to make their cosplay as believable as possible, including cases when they impersonate characters of the opposite sex.

Within the framework of gender studies some scholars have focused on female cosplayers. The majority of cosplayers are female. Hoff (2012, p. 161), citing a 2011 interview with Inui Tatsumi (manager of Cure WorldCosplay.net), estimated that 90% of Japanese cosplayers are female. This number, however, is probably too high, based on the author's observations during Japanese cosplay events and other statistics. For example, female users comprise 78% of registered site members of the website Cosplayer's Archive.<sup>lii</sup> Newman (2008) suggested that contrary to many other areas of culture where women are marginalized (including in fan culture, particularly gaming), in cosplay they play the main role. Tanaka (2012) connected cosplay to feminism, seeing female cosplayers' cultural production and consumption as empowering expression of identity, sexuality and freedom of choice. Changes in social hierarchy, norms and dressing codes in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century allowed women to dress and wear costumes that would serve self-expression rather than pleasing society (Narumi 2009, p. 10-11). On the other hand, the sexualisation and (self-) objectification of women within cosplay has been discussed by female cosplayers and participants of fan events that involve cosplay (Stalker 2012).

An artistic approach to the analysis of cosplayers' performances is exemplified by Rauch and Bolton (2010), who analyzed the ways that cosplay photographers present cosplayers in their pictures. There are various camera techniques used to capture cosplay on film. They include mimicking as closely as possible the original animated frame or video game aesthetics, capturing interactions with the real world, catching cosplayers 'out of the role', and showing the private faces of cosplayers rather than the characters they are embodying. Cosplay photography from the cosplayer's perspective is also a form of art. Carefully staged shoots and further digital image processing are an extension of the cosplayer's activity. They are particularly interested in accurate staging based on the source material that inspires the cosplayer, in other words, they want cosplay pictures that recreate a movie still. While some cosplayers prefer taking part in cosplay events, for others photo-shoots and stylized pictures posted on dedicated websites are the focus of their activities.

Finally, cosplay has been analyzed as a form of nostalgia. Gunnels (2009) discussed the example of Star Wars cosplayers. Many of them were driven by their own

nostalgia, the desire to pass their own childhood myths down to their children, and the creation of closer connections to their children through the fandom. Nostalgia features less in the motivations of younger cosplayers, but it features prominently in fandoms relating to older works with an older average age of fans. Nostalgia has also been identified among Disney cosplayers (Amon 2014). Women impersonating Disney princesses felt nostalgic for the characters they loved as children and placed importance on the reception of their cosplay by children, particularly when the child innocently addressed the cosplayer as if she was actually the character. Nostalgia and connection to younger generations are not universal features of cosplay, but they are important aspects of the practice on occasions.

Having discussed various components of cosplay practice in general, I will now discuss Imperial Japanese Army and Navy cosplay and Nazi cosplay in Japan, and present a crucial difference between them rooted in cosplayers' motivations and identifications.

## **Methodology**

Data for this research were collected in various ways. First, participant observation was carried out in August 2016 during Comiket 90 and at Yasukuni Shrine during the August 15<sup>th</sup> celebrations. At both sites, several informal interviews with military cosplayers were conducted. Comiket was chosen because of the event's large scale. Moreover, numerous informants named it as an event in which they and other military cosplayers are most likely to participate. During Comiket cosplayers were busy with posing, so our conversations were very short. I asked briefly about their motivations and historical interest. In Yasukuni Shrine there was an opportunity to talk for longer. A few people were willing to talk about the history of the uniforms they were wearing, the purpose of wearing them in this particular place, the frequency of their visits to Yasukuni in a uniform, and their general interest in war history. Then, seventeen formal interviews were conducted with military cosplayers active on the biggest Japanese cosplaying social website, Cosplayers Archive (<http://www.cosp.jp/>). Cosplayers Archive users were selected based on their cosplay activity profile, and those regularly posting pictures in the category 'Army and military' were approached via the

website’s message system. Out of the seventeen informants, six perform mainly Nazi cosplay and eleven mainly Imperial Japanese cosplay, although some engage in both. Six also perform anime cosplay. All informants during our correspondence answered ten basic questions concerning their hobby, although they were personalized depending on the cosplayer’s activities visible on the website. In some cases there were follow-up questions and discussions, too. As not all informants gave permission to be cited with user nicknames, cosplayers are listed as informant A to R, with A to F being primarily Nazi cosplayers and G to Q being Imperial Japanese Army cosplayers. All but one of the informants are male, and their ages range from nineteen to forty-four. The youngest is a college student, and the others describe themselves as company workers. Their cosplay experience varies from ten months to twenty-two years. All but one were interested in military cosplay to begin with, even if they initially engaged in anime cosplay. Informants' data are presented in Table 4.

No.	Sex	Age	Years of cosplay experience	Cosplay focus	Region
A	M	29	8	Nazi/Anime	Kanto
B	M	44	22	Nazi/Anime	Kansai
C	F	20	6	Nazi/Anime	Kanto
D	M	19	2	Nazi	Kanto
E	M	-	22	Hitler/Anime	Kansai
F	M	-	5	Nazi (Heinrich Himmler)	Kansai
G	M	20	2	Imperial Army/Railway	Kansai
H	M	23	3	Meiji/Imperial Army	Kansai
I	M	31	14	Imperial Army	Kanto
J	M	mid-	1 year,	Imperial Army	Kansai

		30s	5 years wearing uniform		
K	M	-	10 months	Imperial Army	Kansai
L	M	-	-	Imperial Army	Kansai
M	M	26	9	Imperial Army/Anime	Tohoku
N	M	-	-	Imperial Army	Kansai
O	M	-	-	Imperial Army	Kanto
P	M	-	7	Imperial Army/Anime	Shizuoka
Q	M	28	Less than 1 year	Imperial Army/Anime	Fukuoka

**Table 4 Informants' data (formal online interviews)**

All the informants are aware that their hobby may be seen as controversial, especially in Western societies. During both informal and formal interviews, the informants were aware I am not Japanese (although only one asked my nationality), and that I was conducting academic research for publication in English. It is impossible to state if, and to what degree, their answers were influenced by this knowledge. However, all the informal informants were seen in public places (Comiket/Yasukuni Shrine) and the formal interviews were contacted via cosplayer social media, are open about their hobby, go to multiple events and actively share their cosplay pictures on Cosplayer's Archive, Facebook and Twitter. It cannot be definitively stated that they cover the whole spectrum of military cosplayers' opinions, as there may be individuals secretive about their hobby who present different views. Aware of these limitations, I will further discuss military cosplay practice as presented by the informants.

### **Military cosplay as cultural practice**

Following the cosplay research angles introduced in the literature review, I will discuss aspects relevant for military cosplay, beginning with its characteristics as part of broader cosplay culture in Japan. While the vast majority of cosplayers draw inspiration from works of popular culture, especially manga, anime and video games, some of them engage in 'military cosplay' (*gunsō kosupure*). Military cosplayers specialize in realistic representations of military styles based on close study of archival and educational materials. They often consider themselves a separate group from cosplayers who draw inspiration from pop culture, mainly manga and anime (hereafter 'anime cosplayers'), even though some individuals engage in both practices. Some military cosplayers focus on one style, for example Imperial Japanese Army, while others try different styles depending on the occasion. Soviet or modern uniforms from various countries can become cosplay costumes, but Imperial Japanese Army and Navy uniforms are the most popular, with Third Reich outfits being the next most popular. Military cosplay is a subcategory of general cosplay, but it is characterized by certain distinctive features, making it a slightly different fan practice to anime cosplay. Moreover, differences can be found within the category of military cosplay. Different attitudes towards their hobby presented by the cosplayers are particularly visible when juxtaposing Nazi cosplayers and Imperial Army ones.

In contrast to many anime cosplayers, who take deep pride in their hand-made costumes (Tanaka 2012, pp. 250-251), the vast majority of military cosplayers do not create costumes on their own, but buy them. Nazi cosplayers buy high-quality replicas from online stores. Informant A explained that he has very high standards, so he would not accept a cheap imitation uniform. One retailer mentioned by the cosplayers is S&Graf. It sells replicas of Third Reich, Imperial Japanese Army, American and other military uniforms and accessories. There are at least two other online shops selling Nazi uniforms, and several more selling Imperial Army uniforms. One of the reasons that Nazi cosplay is the second most popular form of military cosplay after Imperial Japanese Army/Navy cosplay is the availability of uniforms. For example, Informant B was primarily interested in cosplaying as a Prussian soldier, but said the uniform was much more difficult to obtain. Two other informants agreed that easy access to high quality replicas encouraged them to try out these uniforms.

Although the above-mentioned military shops also sell replicas of Japanese wartime uniforms, Imperial Army cosplayers seem to prefer original uniforms.

Informant Q, when asked about how he acquires his costumes, corrected me immediately with the remark, 'It is not a costume, it is a real uniform'. The cosplayers browse through flea markets and Internet auctions. They buy old uniforms, which they then repair or enhance with replica elements they buy in specialized shops. Informant J stated that it is important for him to feel a connection to the soldiers by using the same equipment, but because he is too tall for most original uniforms he has to wear ordered replicas. This desire to use original clothes reflects the wish of Imperial Army cosplayers to connect to the wartime generations on a more personal level, as I will discuss later.

Regardless of whether they are using replicas or original uniforms, all cosplayers need visual references to complete their outfit. When asked about their sources of inspiration, all the informants stated that to create their costumes they use archival materials like pictures and recordings while avoiding cultural works like movies because movies often contain mistakes in soldiers' stylizations. Cosplayers emphasize that their practice differs from simply wearing a uniform. Informant J stated that he has 'five years experience of wearing a uniform and one year of cosplaying', while Informant K noted that 'simply putting on an old uniform but completing the outfit with modern day boots and belt is not cosplay'.

Such carefully prepared stylizations are presented online and in real life, mainly using the same venues as anime cosplayers. 'Army and military' is a category present on major cosplay social sites like Cosplayers Archive or Cure. It includes cosplayers wearing both modern and historical uniforms of different armies as well as military-style inspired original cosplay. In terms of events attended, military cosplayers currently participate in many of the events targeting primarily anime cosplayers, like Comiket or Nipponbashi Street Festa in Osaka. Some events, however, prohibit specific types of uniforms (particularly Nazi ones). In other cases cosplayers themselves judge that it would not be appropriate to attend an event in a uniform, as it could make other visitors feel uncomfortable (Informant F). Despite such limitations, military cosplay today has become a part of manga/anime-oriented events. In the 1990s and 2000s, it used to be a rather niche hobby and not particularly visible at major manga and anime-style cosplay events. However, the 2010s witnessed an Asia-Pacific-War-inspired franchise boom. Titles like *Axis powers Hetalia*, *KanColle*, *Dainippon teikoku gjinka kaigun shinyatai*, and *Gokuto jihen*<sup>liii</sup> (Underworld capital incident) popularized military aesthetics at anime cosplay events. The *KanColle* multimedia franchise, in particular, encouraged many

(mainly male) cosplayers to wear navy admiral uniforms (Fig. 7). Some cosplayers that I interviewed developed an interest in military cosplay via *KanColle* cosplay. Moreover, this fandom opened the door for military cosplayers wanting to attend anime-cosplay events, as they participated in their historical uniforms and simply introduced themselves as *KanColle* cosplayers (Informant G). Consequently, the popularity of war-themed franchises boosted interest in military cosplay and changed the previously niche activity into a visible and more broadly accepted activity at pop culture fan events. Although military cosplay requires specific historical knowledge and does not rely on pop culture productions as the major inspiration, pop culture and anime cosplay played a major role in its popularization.



**Figure 7** *KanColle* cosplayers during Comiket 90, Tokyo, August 2016.

Military cosplayers are not only participants at general cosplay events, but attend also events dedicated only to uniform fans. Shops selling uniform replicas and military accessories regularly organize events dedicated to their customers called ‘uniform parties’ (*gunsō pātii*). These small, closed events charge an entrance fee and are not strictly cosplay events as they are mainly about enjoying snacks, drinks and games

together while wearing uniforms, with cosplay performance and photo-shoots as only a side activity. The nature of the event differs based on the presence of alcohol. If alcoholic beverages are included, cosplayers attend as just 'themselves': they wear uniforms, but are relaxed and out of character. During alcohol-free parties, photo-shoots are important. To take good pictures recreating the atmosphere of the period, cosplayers attend the party as the character they impersonate. Some cosplayers feel so connected to their characters, that they give orders to participants cosplaying as soldiers of lower ranks, although it is not necessarily well received by the community (Informant F). Regardless of the format, such meetings allow military cosplayers to wear their uniforms in a private gathering of people sharing their interests. Parties are attended by a number of Imperial Army cosplayers, as well as some wearing other uniforms, but the dominance of Nazi cosplayers is noticeable.

While for Nazi cosplayers uniform parties are the main gatherings after cosplay events, Imperial Army cosplayers also enjoy other types of activities. Informants listed Imperial Army History Preservation Club meetings, survival games and military drills as chances to wear their uniforms.<sup>liv</sup> These types of meetings, especially those involving outdoor physical activities mimicking army-style bootcamps, suggest that next to cosplay practice understood as impersonating a character, many Imperial Army cosplayers are also involved in activities related to the military and history in which they remain as 'self' while wearing a uniform. These types of event are not targeting military cosplayers only and there are different styles of both military drills and survival games. Moreover, some informants started taking part in cosplay events as a result of an interest developed during survival and military games. These two forms of fan behavior clearly influence each other, as many cosplayers are interested in a broad spectrum of Imperial Army-related activities.

### **Military cosplay in social setting**

Just as with cosplay in general, military cosplay is an activity performed in the setting of a cosplayers' community in front of spectators. Military cosplayers create a close community. They stay in touch both online via social media and in real life by attending the same cosplay and uniform-oriented events. The cosplayers' community

has internal standards and can pressure an individual to meet them. Informant E, who specializes in impersonating Adolf Hitler, recounted his beginnings as 'Hitler'. He was interested in Nazi history and military cosplay but had limited financial resources, so he decided to dress up as Hitler. Cosplaying as an SS officer requires purchasing expensive accessories like military badges and aiguillettes, so Hitler is the 'low budget choice': the cosplayer needs only a simple field uniform and a moustache. Informant E prepared his costume and went to an event. Initially he was welcomed with great interest by other Nazi cosplayers, who gathered around 'the Führer'. But he was quickly criticized because although he mimicked Hitler's look, he did not speak, move and behave like Hitler. After being judged 'unprofessional', Informant E decided to use the same techniques that Bruno Ganz used while preparing to portray Hitler in the movie *Downfall* (2004). He spent hours watching archival recordings of Hitler to capture his mannerisms, voice and gestures. He also read testimonies about Hitler's character to be able to 'embody' Hitler's complex character. Having gained these knowledge and skills, he established his position in the community and became the 'acknowledged Führer' around whom other Nazi cosplayers gathered. This episode illustrates moreover the importance of cosplay's performative aspect, particularly among Nazi cosplayers. However, it is less crucial among Imperial Army cosplayers, as I will discuss later.

A crucial part of cosplay practice is interaction with spectators. Military cosplayers are not the main attraction of cosplay events, but receive their share of attention. Despite being widely represented in pop culture it turns out that not all Third Reich uniforms are easily recognizable. Informant F said that his Nazi costume had been mistaken for a modern-day Japanese police, security guard or even railway worker uniform. A female cosplayer wearing a League of German Girls uniform who I approached during Comiket was very pleased with the attention. I was the first person that day who recognized her as wearing a costume. Any type of Nazi uniform other than the black SS officer uniform with a Swastika armband can be difficult for Japanese audiences to recognize. Compared to Western societies, exposure to images of the Nazi past in Japan is limited, so some images vivid in European collective memory are less recognizable.

Conversely, Imperial Japanese Army/Navy cosplayers are widely recognized and get a different reception. They attract less attention than anime cosplayers from young people interested mainly in pop culture, but more attention from older generations. If

seen by elderly people who experienced war, they are often welcomed positively. Informant K noted that he was approached by nostalgic individuals making comments such as 'When we were in junior high school we used to see soldiers looking just like you on the streets!' Informant K was very touched by the reaction of a lady in her nineties. She saw in him her first husband, who was drafted into the army shortly after their wedding but never returned from the front. The lady was very moved seeing the cosplayer, and sung him a *gunka* (wartime military song). Experiencing the horrors of war does not necessarily prevent at least some members of the older generation from seeing military cosplay positively. Boym noticed a similar trend in memory concerning the communist totalitarian past: 'This mass nostalgia is a kind of nationwide midlife crisis; many are longing for the time of their childhood and youth, projecting personal affective memories onto the larger historical picture and partaking collectively in a selective forgetting' (2001, p. 58). Imperial Army cosplayers become for some a nostalgic reminder of their youth and happy relationships they had with family and friends.

### **Identity and performativity**

The most crucial aspect differentiating military cosplayers within the group is the identification with the impersonated character. Nazi cosplay in Japan differs in nature to Imperial army cosplay in that the former is characterized by aestheticism and curiosity, and the latter by admiration and a wish to connect with the national past. The roots of this difference lie in the cosplayer's identification zone. Collective memory, as analyzed by Halbwachs (1992 [1925]), is memory shared within a social framework. It is preserved and commemorated within the group and simultaneously binds the group together. Memories of certain historical events underpin a group's identity and are represented via commemorative symbols and rituals.

In this context, Imperial Army and Navy uniforms are recognizable elements of Japanese collective war memory. Olick (2016, p. 43) proposes understanding collective memory as a 'variety of *mnemonic products and practices*, often quite different from one another. The products include stories, rituals, books (...); the practices include reminiscence, recall, representation, commemoration, celebration (...)' In other words,

Imperial Army cosplay becomes a mnemonic practice (from a cosplayer's perspective) of bodily representation of the nation's past, and simultaneously a mnemonic picture (from the audience's perspective) as images recreating the wartime army are consumed.

The Nazi past, by contrast, lies outside of cosplayers' collective memory, and consequently they act out of their identity zone when engaging in cosplay. Nazi cosplayers repeatedly listed aesthetics when they explain why they started wearing a particular uniform. They found a particular outfit '*kakkoi*' ('cool' and 'attractive'). Several informants mentioned the aestheticism of Nazi uniforms, especially the black uniform of the Allgemeine SS. Similarly as in the case of anime cosplayers, visual attraction is one of the main reasons for wearing Nazi uniforms (Fig. 8).



**Figure 8** Nazi cosplayer posing during Comiket 90, Tokyo, August 2016.

Nazi cosplayers do not identify with their characters. Lamerichs' study of affective process in game cosplay explores the different motivations cosplayers had while choosing a particular character. Cosplay for some performers becomes 'an interpretive process of engaging with the character', as 'the activity is not so much about being the character as getting to know him or her' (2015, p. 108). Many cosplayers do not really identify with the character, but instead treat him or her as a separate existence with an individual personality. By embodying a character, they want to understand it rather than 'become' it. While such an attitude is possible regarding fictional characters created by storytelling in works of popular culture, it is also possible regarding historical figures whose personalities are presented in multiple historical resources, including newsreels, recordings and photographs.

One of the major motivations among Nazi cosplayers is the notion of embodying villains. Informant B, who impersonates Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller, explained that playing such a person feels equivalent to impersonating the 'villain in a favorite anime', which is a popular trend among cosplayers. Villains in pop culture receive considerable attention from audiences, a phenomenon which is reflected in fan productions. From Hannibal Lecter fan fiction to cosplayers impersonating the Joker, evil in popular culture has a long history of attracting consumers. LoBrutto states in his analysis of evil in Martin Scorsese movies that '[v]illains (...) are intriguing, fun to watch and are even sexy. They have power and they have no issues employing it. Often the viewer roots for the bad guy because the good guy is boring' (2014, p. 172). The on-screen complexity of villains and their crossing of the ethical boundaries the audience is accustomed to living within attract the audience. It simultaneously makes them feel safe precisely because it remains 'on screen' (Bruun Vaage 2016). An SS officer in an elegant, black uniform, therefore, is a tempting choice for a cosplayer seeking an evil character to represent: it is aesthetically pleasing evil, 'the devil himself'. The ethical questions that arise in the case of Nazi cosplay, therefore, relate to the difference between fictional and historical narratives embodying 'evil'. Satō, in his analysis of Nazi representations in Japanese popular culture, suggested that to avoid the rebirth of fascist ideology it is much more effective to 'humanize Hitler rather than demonize him' (2017, p. 407), and history should be studied without simplifications and taboos. Informant F seems to share the belief in the role of understanding the complexity of human nature set against historical

conditions. He stated that this process of understanding how such evil in history was born is crucial for preventing the past from repeating itself. Cosplaying as Nazis without knowing Nazi history, therefore, would be disrespectful to Holocaust victims and their families.

Bainbridge and Norris' (2009, sec. 1) defined cosplay as 'akin to performance art, taking on the *habitus* of a particular character through costume, accessories, gesture and attitude; (...) inhabiting the role of a character both physically and mentally'. This definition reflects accurately the performative aspect of military cosplay, particularly in the case of Nazi cosplayers. Out of the six Nazi cosplayers interviewed, three impersonate a specific persona. Similarly to anime cosplayers studying information about their characters, Nazi cosplayers learn in detail the biographies of the historical personas. They try to capture different aspects of the historical figure's character via their research and performance. Cosplayers learn, for example, that Hitler could be kind to animals and children, or that Himmler could be timid and concerned with other people's opinions, while simultaneously being personally responsible for genocide. Cosplayers study the way specific characters spoke or moved, and what type of gestures they used, to be able to give a perfect performance during events (as discussed above in the case of Hitler cosplayer).

[A]lthough this is a highly ambiguous concept, "to cosplay perfect", cosplayers seem to have specific criteria such as "perfectly copied" details of costumes and props, mimetic accuracy in posing and facial expression, proximity between the cosplayer's physique and that of the character, overall believability, etc. which all reflect the cosplayer's encyclopedic knowledge of the show and the character embodied through cosplay (Ahn 2008, pp. 67-68).

Nazi cosplayers have deep knowledge about Third Reich history including war crimes, but are also challenged by the idea of embodying evil, or tempted by the chance to gain insights into human nature's complexity. Their research indicates intellectual interest rather than emotional involvement.

This aspect of identification with the impersonated character works differently in the case of Imperial Army cosplay, which is deeply rooted in feelings of admiration (*akogare*) towards the wartime generation and identification with this generation as

role models. Two cosplayers said that through cosplay (especially using original uniforms) they aim to connect with the war generation and feel their struggle. One also expressed pride in the nation's past by wearing an Imperial uniform. Deeply admired wartime heroes that cosplayers perceive as role models, like Admiral Yamamoto Isokoru or fighter ace Sakai Saburō, can also provide inspiration for cosplay. Imperial Army cosplay, therefore, is performed within the Japanese identification zone and is characterized by emotional connections and positive identification. Consequently, among cosplayers there is no notion of 'evil' in these impersonations of soldiers from their own nation. They are national heroes, who sacrificed themselves for the sake of the country. Takenaka (2016) discussed Japanese 'postmemory' (a memory that is not experienced, but inherited) in the light of Japan's post-1995 revisionist turn. In the case of postwar generations, 'through this process of inheritance as postmemory, the war trauma has become the trauma of their people, which they too have come to embody through the environment that they have grown up in, a part of their identity'. Unlike Nazi history, the Asia-Pacific War belongs to Japanese identity together with the loss, responsibility and guilt it carries. Takenaka (2015, p. 168) argued that in terms of trauma and recovery a crucial motive for postmemorial dealing with difficult past is the 'need to recreate and take ownership of this inherited past that was never a part of their own experience'. Cosplayers take an active part in the recreation of an idealized past, connecting personally to heroic images of their ancestors while often actively rejecting the guilt and responsibility related to Japanese involvement in the war. Even those cosplayers who claim to have no interest in political discussion are close to this worldview, in which soldiers are ultimately war heroes deserving deepest respect because they died fighting for peace, not in an aggressive war.

Visual attraction is much less important for Imperial Army than for Nazi cosplayers, but remains one of minor motivations to begin the practice. Informant P stated that he always considered uniforms cool, particularly the white ones of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Informant N began as a Nazi cosplayer, but he soon decided that Third Reich uniforms do not really fit Japanese posture, and Imperial Army ones look much better on him. Looks, therefore, are also considered, but for none of the interviewees it was the only reason to engage in Imperial Army cosplay. All informants expressed great interest in the wartime past. Some of them grew up hearing wartime stories. Two informants gave family history as the main source of their interest in the

military. They know their grandfathers participated in combat and heard stories about it from early childhood. Four out of ten cosplayers said they had been interested 'since childhood', and one was interested in war history from high school. They listed old Japanese movies, manga, and military modeling as stimulating their interest. Cosplay, therefore, has its roots in broader representations of the war in cultural memory. It was surrounding the cosplayers since childhood as part of their surroundings, education and upbringing.

In a similar manner to Nazi cosplayers, Imperial Army cosplayers also study war history and refer to many resources to make their cosplay as authentic as possible. However, they do it in a slightly different way. Imperial Army cosplay lacks the focus on specific historical persona that can be observed in the case of Nazi cosplay. None of the informants specialized in impersonation of a particular historical figure. They were just 'a soldier'. Consequently, there is no need to study biographies or learn elements like somebody's manner of speaking, moving, or using gestures. Imperial Army cosplayers' main reason to study modern Japanese history is general interest in the topic. They all stated this, and expressed interest especially in the period since the Meiji restoration. One informant stated that he 'has no interest in anything except Japanese history (Informant J)'. Few suggested that they are especially interested in military equipment from a technical angle, and two distanced themselves from political aspects of the war, stating that they are not interested in them and were not willing to engage in the discussion concerning Japan's role in Asia-Pacific War and historical awareness concerning it. They tried to separate their hobby from war responsibility issues, not only during the interview but also as a general rule. This need to distance their hobby from controversies concerning war history suggests simultaneously cosplayers' awareness of the problem, and is another distinctive feature in comparison with Nazi cosplayers, who study Third Reich history with interest and at a distance in a manner resembling an academic attitude.

The research cosplayers conduct in relation to their hobby is directly connected to the performative aspect of their activity, and consequently to their identification with the character. Imperial Army cosplayers recreate outfits with great attention to detail and with reference to historical photographs and educational materials, but their attention to acting skills is limited. Informant K suggested that the main skills are proper posing, and the way to wear the uniform and handle military equipment. These

are skills that he acquired mainly through contact with other cosplayers and members of the Imperial Army History Preservation Club he belongs to. Moreover, some military cosplayers also engage in military drills and historical reenactments, while one informant's main activity is mountain hiking while wearing the uniform. Rather than getting 'in character' of a particular soldier during cosplay performance, Imperial Army cosplayers aim at acquiring a general 'military style', which remains close to the cosplayer's 'self', instead of switching between enacting a role while cosplaying and being 'self' during all other occasions. Nazi cosplay therefore has greater focus on 'getting to know' the historical figure in the way that actors get to know their role. Through detailed study they aim at enactment as close to original as possible. On the contrary, for Imperial Army cosplayers their cosplay character and 'self' are very close, so their effort put into acting/performance remains limited.

### **Cosplay through the camera lens**

Cosplay photography (posing for spectators' pictures and participating in photo-shoots) is an art form in its own right. It is also a vital part of the cosplay experience. All the informants for formal interviews were picked based on their activity on a cosplay social website where users upload their pictures, so for all of them photography is part of their hobby. The pictures suggest, however, that cosplayers present a range of attitudes towards cosplay photographs. Moreover, the attention to detail is directly related to the performative aspect of cosplay as well as cosplayers' ideological engagement.

Nazi cosplayers pay great attention to the coherence of their performance, as visible in the pictures they post online. The photographs are carefully framed to give the impression that they could have been taken in Nazi Germany. By studying archival pictures cosplayers reconstruct typical representations of Nazi officers. They present high-ranked Nazis doing paperwork, studying maps or discussing in groups. Cosplayers carefully choose rooms resembling old European architecture. Informant F commented, 'it feels weird to pose in the woods as a soldier'. Indeed, more historical pictures were taken indoors. Cosplayers also digitally enhance pictures, mostly using black and white

or sepia color filters, which strengthens the impression of looking at an old picture (Fig. 9).

Consequently, an important part of Nazi cosplay photography is selecting locations for photo-shoots. Pictures can be taken in a variety of locations, but old, monumental buildings with European-style architecture are the primary choice. Sites like Mikage Kōkaidō (an assembly hall in Kobe built in 1933) or Kyōtofuchō Kyūhonkan (the old Kyoto prefectural building, built in a Renaissance style in 1904) are popular. As shown in Fig. 9, the Western-style old building of Oda Primary School in Iga with its white walls and tall columns brings to mind European manor houses, giving the cosplayer a chance to take a picture in an environment that resembles the architecture of 1940s Germany.



**Figure 9 Heinrich Himmler cosplay photo-shoot by the old building of Oda Primary School. Iga, Mie Prefecture.**

Cosplay as performative art created for the audience has special meaning in the struggles of Nazi cosplayers to recreate as best they can the atmosphere of the era. Two informants said that although they use archival photographs to reconstruct the precise look of the characters they impersonate, they prefer pop culture works as inspiration for photo-shoots. Informant F explained that, in some ways, the people in historical photographs were 'amateurs', and the moments captured by the camera were just from everyday life. Movie scenes, however, are made to be seen by the audience. The artistic value created through professional composition and lighting combined with the actors' bodily performances is considerably higher than for original photographs. Because cosplay is also performance created to be aesthetically pleasant, Informant F considers professional productions representing the era a better inspiration for good images enjoyable in the audience's eyes. This aim of achieving coherence between the look, behavior and photo-shoot environment can go even further. Just as anime cosplayers have business cards they give out during cosplay events, military cosplayers can have stylized cards, too, carefully crafted to be coherent with the character being impersonated. Figure 10 shows a cosplayer's business card inspired by an SS officer's ID card, complete with fonts and stamps from the period.



**Figure 10 Nazi cosplayer's business card.**

Some of the Imperial Army cosplayers also aim at recreating the war era atmosphere, mostly by stylizing the pictures with black and white or sepia filters (Fig. 11), but even this effect is not broadly used. Many post regular pictures of themselves without any special effects. They never wear makeup, as Nazi cosplayers sometimes do. The surroundings, moreover, are not a vital part of the stylization. Pictures often have an indistinctive background, like trees or a wall, sometimes even elements of modern technology (like modern cars or boats) that Nazi cosplayers carefully avoid. Imperial Army cosplayers still need to go to certain locations to have pictures taken, as it is against cosplay community rules to take pictures in public places used by other people. Even if the site is not public, obtaining permission from local authorities is required. Cosplayers need to use places where cosplay is allowed, but have much greater freedom and a larger variety of locations in comparison to Nazi cosplayers. Photo-shoot pictures, moreover, lack the sophisticated stylization present among other cosplayers. Imperial Army cosplayers can be holding weapons or (usually modern) Japanese flags, but poses

are limited mainly to standing straight with a serious face. Cosplayers look straight into the camera and avoid close-ups and the high or low angle pictures that are popular among anime cosplayers. Many Imperial Army cosplayers do not post photographs from photo-shoots, but just pictures from cosplay events. This limited care for perfect performance and photographic stylization compared to Nazi cosplay (and also to anime cosplay) shows that in the case of Imperial Army cosplay the line between the cosplayer's 'self' and the character being impersonated is much thinner, and it may not even be possible to talk about these cosplayers actually 'playing' a character. It often seems to be a projection of 'self'. As I will discuss below, when linking informants statements and their profiles, a connection can be made between the performative/artistic aspect of their cosplay and their ideological engagement in their hobby.



**Figure 11 Photo-shoot of fighter pilots cosplay. Tsukuba Naval Air Corp Memorial, Kasama, Ibaraki Prefecture.**

### **Cosplay as expression of ideological engagement**

Ideological and political engagement is an aspect missing from pop culture cosplay, but can be present in military cosplay. The interviews suggest a range of ideological involvement, directly related to cosplay's performative aspect.

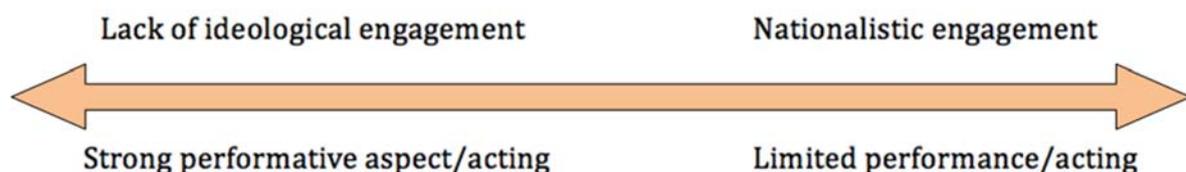
Nazi cosplayers are very engaged in cosplay practices treated as acting/performance. They present great knowledge about Third Reich history, but remain distanced from and critical of it. They express interest in the Nazi past, but not a fascination with Nazism as ideology. They treat cosplay as an entertaining, educational and 'cool' hobby.

The situation of Imperial Army cosplayers is more complex. On the basis of my interviews, military cosplayers range from ideologically distanced historical militaria fans to ideologically-engaged nationalists. Some elements regularly repeated throughout the interviews require analysis in the context of the nationalist glorification of the war dead. Cosplayers' perceptions of wartime soldiers are connected to the concept of *eirei*. The military war dead are enshrined at Yasukuni 'as *eirei*, as a god that had sacrificed his life for Japan, [so] guilt could no longer be attributed to the war dead' (Takenaka 2015, p. 92). The war dead are absolved of any crime they could have committed while alive, and 'become a collective ancestor of the Japanese state: the ancestor that sacrificed to establish and protect the family, which is Japan (Takenaka 2015, p. 93). In Imperial Army cosplay there is a visible aspect of admiration and looking up to the war dead, complemented in some cases by other examples of nationalistic rhetoric.

Informant J, who wears his uniform for cosplay events, but mainly while climbing mountains, explained the meaning of his activity: 'By using clothes and equipment used by the wartime generation and experiencing personally their hardships, it is possible to fully realize the origins of the present-day peace and the nobility of it'. This statement shows clearly the informant's belief that the honorable wartime struggles of Japanese soldiers are the foundation of today's 'peace and prosperity'. It is one of the elements of revisionist rhetoric, supported by Yasukuni Shrine circle, but also by the government, as discussed in Chapter 4. Informant H, who is interested mainly in Meiji history, went even further. He said that there are multiple textbooks targeting youth telling 'downright lies', and now he is learning 'real history' from the books he gathered by himself. As an example he gives the Russo-Japanese War, 'a conflict given one or two lines in schoolbooks, although it was a great conflict even in the context of all the wars in history. For the first time a colored people fought for Asia and defeated a white nation, saving Japan from a crisis'. This particular cosplayer also sees cosplay events as a chance to teach others about the 'true history', because his uniform raises interest among other participants at the event who sometimes ask questions about it. This then becomes an

opportunity for the cosplayer to discuss historical issues with them. The narrative of Japan as Asia's liberator in the fight against Western colonialism is the same as the nationalistic narrative advocated by among others the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukuru Kai*), *Nippon Kaigi* (a nationalist lobby and religious group), Yūshūkan museum and the revisionist mangaka Kobayashi Yoshinori (Takenaka 2016). Informant H combined his views with the will to 'educate' Japanese citizens through his hobby. This is necessary because mainstream media and school education disseminate lies about history. Similarly informant Q expressed regret that there are so many prejudices among Japanese people, who he believes see the war dead as 'irrational, rough-cut, and weak right-wingers, who have a bad historical image'. Notions of the war dead's noble sacrifice as a foundation of Japan's present peace, and the Imperial Army as an Asian leader in the fight against imperialism, complemented by the belief that mainstream historical narratives present the 'wrong version of history', clearly belong to nationalistic discourse.

Based on the interview evidence, a possible relationship between the ideological engagement of informants and their cosplay performance can be identified. Cosplayers who stylized their pictures with greater care, used more original photography angles, stood in less static poses, took more effort to find suitable backdrops, and digitally enhanced their photographs were also those who expressed least nationalistic sentiment in the interviews. They also tended not to limit themselves to military cosplay, but also tried anime-inspired stylization, or liked other types of uniforms, like railway employee uniforms (Informant G). More ideologically-involved cosplayers tended to post pictures of simply themselves attending events in uniforms, without much additional effort. It seems, therefore, that the greater the performative aspect and the notion of 'character impersonation', the bigger the distance exists between cosplayer's self and 'soldier' they enact (Fig. 12).



**Figure 12 Relation of military cosplay's performative aspect and nationalistic engagement.**

On the other hand, cosplayers who strongly identify with the army and navy members they impersonate pay less attention to the 'play' and aesthetic aspects of cosplay. They refer more often to honoring war dead, 'experiencing' being a soldier (albeit without the aspects of fighting and loss) and doing it 'as Japanese'. In other words, they express clearly their national identity. The concerns of Informant N encapsulate the views of the more nationalistic Imperial Army cosplayer:

There are probably many Japanese taught that Japan did many wrong things during the war, so they are critical towards uniforms and wartime Japan. But when you think calmly, isn't it weird to think badly of your own fathers and grandfathers for fighting for their country? Isn't Japan the only country in the world doing so? But it is also weird that there are no hard feelings when looking at American Army uniforms, although they caused harm to Japanese citizens during occupation, air raids and atomic bombings...

### **Yasukuni Shrine as a cosplay site**

Until now I have discussed the activities of people perceiving and calling themselves cosplayers. They are, however, not all of the people who dress in uniforms in their free time. Others engaging in such activities can be seen in Yasukuni Shrine, mainly on August 15<sup>th</sup>. The shrine today is a symbol of the controversies surrounding Japanese war responsibility (Breen 2008, Takenaka 2015). The enshrinement of Class A war criminals in 1978, the exhibits in Yūshūkan museum presenting revisionist historical narrative, and cabinet members' visits to the shrine have all raised critical voices both inside Japan and abroad. On August 15<sup>th</sup>, the war end anniversary, the shrine becomes the centre of attention for nationalists. Right-wingers demonstrate in support of Yasukuni values and hand out leaflets, while numerous individuals come to the shrine to pay their respects to family members enshrined there. Moreover, Yasukuni Shrine is also a space where Imperial Army cosplay is openly combined with a nationalistic agenda.

Takenaka (2015, pp. 57-73) discussed Yasukuni's role as a *meisho* (famous site) from the 1870s until it gradually involved into a military institution after the Russo-Japanese War. Events like Western-style horse races, circuses and fireworks attracted

visitors to the shrine, which was seen as primarily an entertainment site. This was combined with the celebration of Japanese military success, but was 'not necessarily [tied] to respect for the war dead' (Takenaka 2015, p. 67). Although in the present day Yasukuni Shrine seems to be far from its history as a site of amusement, the atmosphere surrounding it on August 15<sup>th</sup> is not limited to the sombre scenes of commemoration mainly presented in the news media. On the war end anniversary Yasukuni also becomes a site of joyful celebration. I visited the Shrine on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and on that day in addition to the mourners there were people who generated the atmosphere of a beer garden. There were a number of groups of mainly men drinking alcohol, singing *gunka*, and holding Rising Sun Flags. Some of them were in Imperial Army and Navy uniforms. They were mostly young or middle-age, with a few older men, but all belonged to the post-war generation. One man, wearing a replica Nazi uniform, was showing a printout of a Wikipedia webpage dedicated to Michael Wittmann, a wartime tank commander. When I asked about it, he explained that he was wearing the uniform in honor of Wittmann, who was the bravest fighter against Soviet army, and 'Japan remembers!'. I approached a number of Imperial Army impersonators and they explained that they wear uniforms to honor the war dead. I had a chance to talk at length with a group of four men who called themselves 'history enthusiasts'. The youngest man, who was in his mid-twenties, said that since sixth grade he has spent every weekend worshipping at Yasukuni. The uniform he was wearing belonged originally to his grandfather, although some missing parts were replaced with replicas. According to this informant, most uniforms seen around the Shrine were created using a combination of original parts and replicas to complete the look. The four 'cosplayers' introduced themselves as friends who meet at Yasukuni Shrine every year on August 15<sup>th</sup> to honor the war dead.

The word 'cosplay' was not mentioned once in the conversation, but the wearing of uniforms was treated as an 'honorific practice' for the war dead. However, strictly speaking these practices witnessed at Yasukuni Shrine conform to the definition of cosplay given at the beginning of this chapter. The 'cosplayers' in Yasukuni are wearing costumes because for none of them is the uniform an everyday outfit. They were not veterans or soldiers, but dressed in outfits of historical figures, namely Imperial Army soldiers. They wore uniforms with the purpose of presenting themselves to an 'audience', namely Yasukuni visitors on August 15<sup>th</sup>. They were walking around, willingly

posing for pictures. Most of them did not limit themselves to just wearing the outfit, since their poses suggested elements of performance: despite not being soldiers some saluted, presented gun replicas, or stood to attention. Moreover, in the same way that cosplayers arrive at the cosplay events in regular clothes, change on site for the event, and then change again before leaving the venue, these 'cosplayers' at Yasukuni Shrine also change on site. They change into their uniforms only for the few hours that they stand around the shrine. These behaviors are all consistent with the definition of cosplay.

These activities also share characteristic features of the Imperial Army military cosplay identified in sites away from actual sites of military commemoration. As I have argued, at least some Imperial Army cosplayers see their activities as an expression of admiration towards the war dead. It is impossible, therefore, to draw a clear line between the military cosplayers I have met at pop culture events such as Comiket and the individuals impersonating soldiers at Yasukuni Shrine, other than their own self-perceptions. For both groups, the wish to honor *eirei* by wearing uniforms makes their cosplay the embodiment of the Yasukuni historical narrative, in which 'the peace and prosperity enjoyed not only by Japan but also by other East and Southeast Asian nations would not have been possible without the tremendous suffering and sacrifice of the Japanese during the war years' (Takenaka 2015, p. 165). Wearing a uniform means simultaneously honoring war heroes and expressing personal pride in belonging to the Japanese nation, sentiments which are impossible to disconnect from nationalistic rhetoric.

## **Conclusions**

Despite the growing number of successful pop culture productions using war-theme references, the practice of military cosplay as discussed in this chapter remains distinctive from anime cosplay in terms of the inspiration of cosplayers, the events they attend, and their self-perceptions. Military cosplayers know each other and create a community both online and in real life. On cosplay social sites they belonging to the same general category of 'Army and military'. However, despite such connections

military cosplayers vary in their attitudes towards their hobby. They cover the spectrum of motivations from 'aestheticism' to 'nationalism'.

Nazi cosplayers place themselves closest to the purely aesthetic end of the scale. They are attracted by the 'cool' uniforms and tempted by the notion of cosplaying as a villain. Typically, the more invested the cosplayer, the deeper his or her knowledge about the Nazi regime. They learn about the Third Reich, including Nazi crimes, and study archival materials carefully to reconstruct in detail the soldier's appearance, and find photo-shoot sites compatible with their performance. Acting skills play major role in their practice and are strictly judged by other Nazi cosplayers. The performance is also reflected in the highly stylized pictures they take during photo-shoots. They remain distanced and critical towards Nazi ideology.

In the middle of scale can be placed conservative Imperial Japanese Army cosplayers who identify more strongly with the soldiers they impersonate than Nazi ones, but are not expressing nationalistic ideology. They look up to wartime soldiers as role models, and through cosplay search for connections to their grandparents' generation, but they also find wartime uniforms visually attractive. They are deeply interested in wartime technology and warfare details, but try to distance themselves from wartime politics and Japanese war responsibility, and are aware of the controversies related to the issue. These cosplayers can enhance their pictures with sepia or black and white effect, and take part in photo-shoots.

Finally, some Imperial Japanese Army cosplayers express clear nationalistic engagement. They wear (preferably original) uniforms to feel the struggles the wartime generation experienced when building the current peace and prosperity, and simultaneously honour them as national heroes. These cosplayers use their hobby to discuss war history with the audience and teach them 'the truth' about the past, free of Japanese war responsibility issues. They 'enact' a character less, and present 'self in a military style', and do not pose too much for pictures or stylize photographs with digital effects. Imperial Army cosplay is, in this case, the embodiment of national pride and a practice for honoring the war dead.

Ideologically engaged Imperial Army cosplayers using nationalistic rhetoric can be found on general cosplay events and among cosplay social sites users. Such cosplayers can also be met in Yasukuni Shrine, where they use the practice of wearing wartime uniforms as a form of bodily worship of the *eirei*. Even if they do not describe

themselves as cosplayers, their practice conforms to the definition of cosplay, as they engage in the same practices with the same ideological standpoints as many other military cosplayers.

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<sup>lii</sup> Searching for similar statistics is impossible on Cure.com. While there is a possibility that this data is not fully representative, it indicates that male cosplayers are a bigger group than Hoff suggested.

<sup>liii</sup> A 2015 RPG video game that was turned into a three-volume manga about an underworld escort. The franchise's design was visibly inspired by wartime military aesthetics.

<sup>liv</sup> A short movie from such a drill can be watched here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCBvJoBCidM>

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusions**

As shown throughout the case studies, numerous Japanese fan productions in various forms contain references to the events of the Asia-Pacific War. The vast majority of representations conform to the conservative and nationalistic views of war history. This thesis has provided analysis of the form, content and connection to mainstream media of fan productions, contributing to our understanding of the role of war memories in the lives of the youngest generation of Japanese. The use of historical content as a form of entertainment shows which narratives are actively sought by young people to be actively replicated as fan productions for broad consumption by other fans. The emotional war-related narratives present in fan productions play a role in young people's identity construction by strengthening national sentiment.

#### **The value of and visibility of knowledge in fan productions**

Deepening knowledge and skills concerning one's hobby is an integral part of any free time activity in Japan, particularly in the world of otaku. Most people creating war related fan productions cannot be called historically ignorant. On the contrary, many of them have conducted in-depth research in the field on which they are focused. The level of knowledge presented depends on the form of their activity, and some forms tend to be more visibly based on information than others. It is most limited in the case of MADs, as they are derivative works created as a result of the consumption of mainstream media. Some of the creators of war-themed fan songs had read kamikaze farewell letters and visited memory sites, but their works do not present evidence of more detailed knowledge. The exception in this regard is the creator of the song about Unit 731 discussed in Chapter 4. Songs are based on the emotionality of poetic lyrics combined with music rather than on detailed information. Slightly more of the creators' research is visible in Vocaloid compositions. They are made to be consumed in video format, so detailed original animation often provides evidence of the creators' great care for historical accuracy, for example in the depiction of planes and vessels. Finally, cosplay

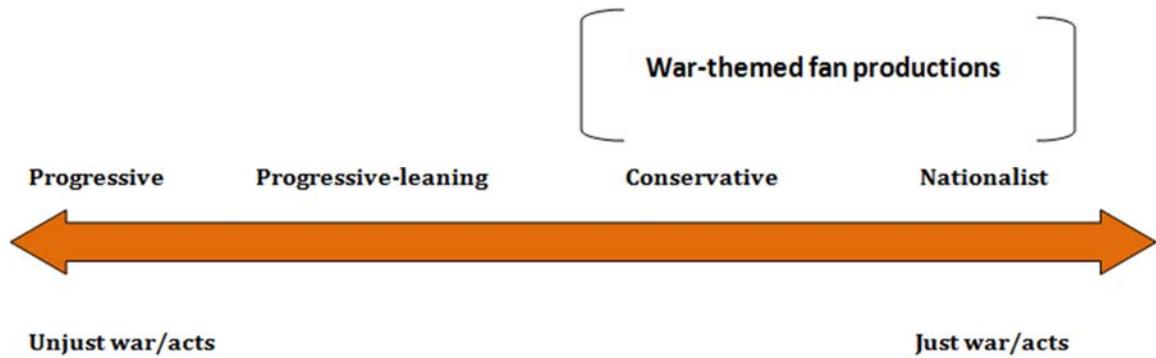
and *dōjinshi* are material expressions of deep research concerning specific issues. The activities are based on the study of numerous archival pictures, technical details of vessels and weapons, and primary or secondary sources.

As other creators and consumers are a demanding audience, mistakes in historical representation will be pointed out by the community. Detailed knowledge, therefore, is not only a result of the inner needs of the creator. It is also forced on the creator by the community standards. The required level of historical knowledge is directly related to the form of fan production, with some creators becoming experts in their area of interest. Fan productions are not only an expression of young people's interest in the wartime past. They can also be the reason for their knowledge about the past to grow, and may be the reason for the interest to be spread through the community.

The crucial element, however, is the selectiveness of fans' historical knowledge. Many can be experts on the history of a specific vessel, or the technical specifications of wartime planes, or equipment details of Imperial Army officers' uniforms. Deep knowledge about a very specific field is not equivalent of general historical awareness. 'Fans of war' therefore may easily lack broad historical context of Japanese war history and knowledge of even major issues because they enthusiastically study only those details they use in their productions.

### **Conservatism and national sentiment in fan production**

In comparison with mainstream productions, which cover the whole ideological spectrum of Japanese war memories, the historical consciousness exhibited within fan productions is clustered towards the conservative and nationalistic end of ideological spectrum (Fig. 13).



**Figure 13 War-themed fan videos placement of the judgmental memory spectrum**

Progressive content raising the topic of Japanese war crimes is rare. Some productions, particularly Hiroshima-themed works, focus on the representation of Japanese as victims of war. However, the majority of productions tend to glorify the wartime generation. They present soldiers as young idealists bravely fighting to protect their home (*furusato*) and loved ones, as role models to be followed by present day youth, and as ancestors of whom one can and should be proud. Without engaging the debates regarding Japanese aggression and state responsibility, these works empathetically present soldiers' actions as justified by love and higher ideals.

Fan productions are created by young people in their free time, as a hobby, for the creator to enjoy the creative process. For the primarily young audience the aim is to enjoy the consumption of the work. Engaging with war narratives via fan productions is, after all, a form of entertainment. The hours of research concerning war-related topics are not undertaken for the purpose of critical analysis of the wartime events. Instead, it is an enjoyable investment of time. Strong emotions contribute to the creator's commitment and positive attitude towards the object of their studies and motivate production. Affective engagement with war narratives as a form of entertainment naturally anchors fans' views closer to the conservative/nationalistic end of the scale of judgmental memory.

War-themed productions illustrate how young people are using war narratives as an element of their identity construction. Takenaka (2016) suggested that for the postmemory generation war 'is based on abstract concepts such as responsibility and guilt. As a result, they tend to welcome symbolic gestures that allow them to feel that they are not responsible'. In addition to Takenaka's point, the evidence from this study of fan productions indicates that many individuals belonging to the postmemory

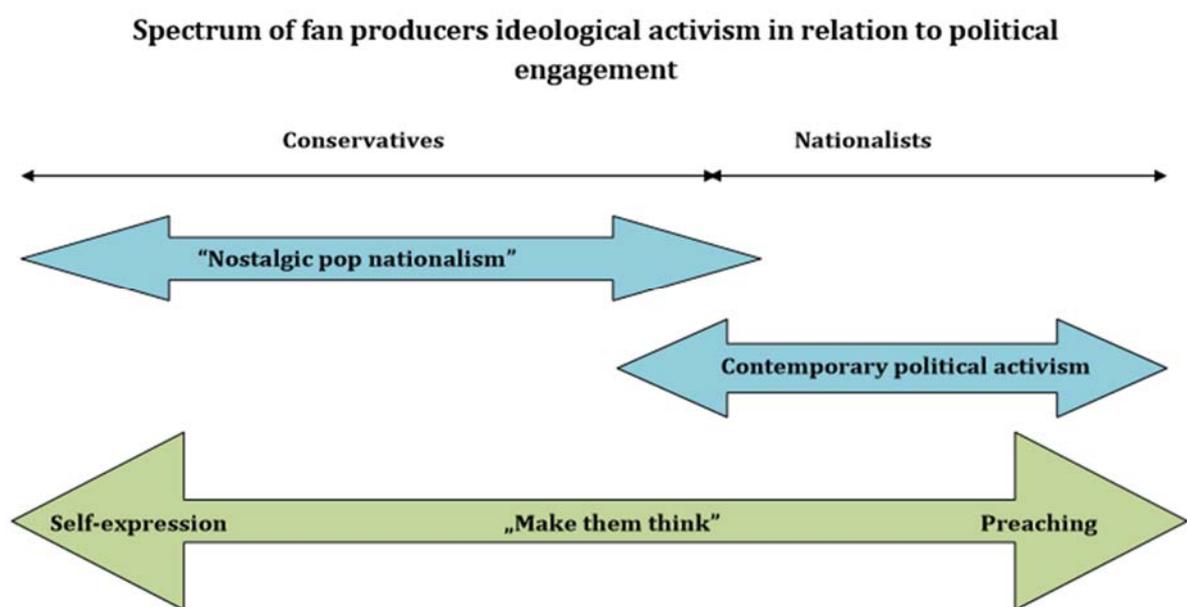
generation use nostalgic reimagination of the wartime past to support their identity as Japanese. Many young fan creators replicate and spread images in which they feel pride, for example by emphasizing their heroic ancestry and the high moral standards of their great-grandparents' and grandparents' generation. These are idealized nostalgic images of the past, epitomized by elegant uniforms, manly bonds of friendship till the end, young men willingly sacrificing their lives for a better future, and heartbroken lovers accepting the cause when reading the farewell letter. These themes appear repeatedly in fan productions. They are also the clichés of conservative war representations, which offer comfort and feelings of security in times of economical and social insecurity. Japan is faced with many pressing challenges in the twenty-first century: internationalization, an aging population, persistent economic sluggishness, and the specter of significant population (and therefore economic) shrinkage. For Japanese youth the future can seem unpredictable and disconcerting. Nora (2011, p. 438) stated that

it was the way in which a society, nation, group or family envisaged its future that traditionally determined what it needed to remember of the past to prepare that future; and this in turn gave meaning to the present, which was merely a link between the two.

Some of the fan creators believe that modern day Japanese lack higher values and are ashamed of the nation's past. For them, connection to the wartime past can help young people to become better versions of themselves. Awareness of being the progeny of heroes brings a sense of pride and of belonging to something bigger than oneself. It obliges one to make the best use of one's life. Such a perception of the past (and self, as part of a 'community of history and destiny', as Smith (2011, p. 232) put it) is expressed by fans in their productions with the wish that it will spread out to other young people.

The works I was able to survey were only those published online or distributed in material form via dedicated channels, like Internet shops or fan events. The possibility cannot be excluded that some fans create works that they keep private and never share with anyone except family and close friends. All the works discussed in this thesis have been made available for the general public, and have been made for the purpose of being shared with the world. Reasons for publishing fan productions can be put on a spectrum between 'self' (self-expression) and 'other' (preaching to the audience), as presented in

Figure 14. Some fans aim mainly to express their own emotions, skills and knowledge via their productions. They primarily enjoy the creative process and do not focus on convincing their audience of certain views. A major group wants to ‘make the audience think’ (*kangaesaseru*) about war issues. They believe that war stories are not discussed enough, particularly by young people, so they want to give youth an impulse to think more about the war. However, although their works are mainly conservative in tone, the authors do not strongly promote specific views. They just hope that the audience will become more interested in the past. The last group creates works with the intention of teaching the audience about the war history as creators see it, aiming at actively spreading certain ideology among viewers. In general, creators with nationalistic views have greater tendency to produce works with the goal of ‘preaching’, while conservatives express their personal sentiment or want to ‘make the audience think’.



**Figure 14 Spectrum of fan producers’ ideological activism in relation to political engagement.**

Not only is there a link between engaging in war narratives as a hobby and conservative views, but there is also a link between the form of fan productions and their mainly conservative content. The case studies have shown that although all forms share a number of elements, some themes and approaches prevail in specific types of production. War-related music is rooted in the long tradition of protest songs and

activism, where music was performed live during events that were bringing together people of similar views. Consequently, fan music is the most directly politically engaged of all the forms, despite remaining a fan production created as hobby. Vocaloid compositions tackle the topic of Hiroshima bombing most often among fan productions, being an area where progressive-leaning content can be most easily found. Moreover, Hiroshima-themed Vocaloid compositions are more explicit about the A-bombs' effects on the human body than mainstream music. MADs rely heavily on viewers' emotional responses, and combine touching images (often presenting combat) with emotional music. *Dōjinshi* aim at aesthetic visuals, which are pleasant for the circles to draw and readers to look at, and reflect simultaneously the general trends and fashions present in *dōjinshi* subculture. Sanitized images of the Navy became a natural choice for circles interested in war narratives. Finally war-themed cosplay is naturally limited to military uniforms. When performed within one's identity zone (namely as an Imperial Japanese Army soldier) it becomes a manifestation of admiration and connection to wartime generation. In these cases it can be concluded that cosplay is incompatible with presenting progressive views.

Across all the fan productions, these short, emotional, entertaining and aesthetically pleasant forms created for fun provide limited suitability for discussion about Japanese war responsibility. Their creation results from the conservative angles already present in the creator's views. However, there is evidence that the research conducted by creators while creating their fan production strengthens the creator's loyalty towards the purpose of his or her study. In short, in fan productions much more than in mainstream media, 'the medium *is* the message'. Their form is suitable for the expression of the affective attachment of creators, while the creative process causes the attachment to grow. Consequently, fan productions are almost inevitably conservative.

Throughout the thesis I have also emphasized the role of *kandō*, namely strong emotional response to the given content. The narrative types of fan productions (except for cosplay) are characterized by the high emotionality of the stories they tell the audience. In their short, condensed form these works manage to evoke sympathy towards characters, positive identification, admiration, pride and sadness. This mixture of responses is often encapsulated in the simple statement '*kandō shimashita*' under the work posted on the Internet. Seeking the feeling of *kandō* by consuming conservative historical narratives is not necessarily synonymous with having conservative or

nationalistic views. It can, however, contribute to the strengthening of national sentiment, and thereby make a critical, distanced approach to the nation's past much more difficult to achieve among enthusiastic consumers of this type of narratives.

### **Fan productions as products and tools of memory medialization**

War-themed fan productions are not created in a vacuum. They are a form of entertainment, a product of historical research, and a creative, emotional expression of national identity. But, they are also a visible effect of the medialization of war memory. Medialization, as Eigler (2005, p. 18) put it, refers to how 'the immense influence of the visual media and information technology on the blurring between fiction and reality, (...) has far-reaching implications not only for our sense of the past but also for our sense of the present and future'. Fan productions are also heavily influenced by works of popular culture, which shape the way fans perceive the past, and consequently the content of their productions. I argue, moreover, that fan productions are more than the final product of research and media consumption. They are medialized images of the past on their own. They reach new consumers and present them with more or less fictionalized war narratives. However, watching a war-themed MAD, listening to a Vocaloid composition, or even reading a *dōjinshi* requires significantly less effort, time and attention than even watching a war-themed mainstream movie. The lack of effort is even more marked in comparison to reading an academic or educational publication. Fan productions are short, usually visually attractive, entertaining and accessible online often for free. Both form and content are understandable for young consumers, whose attention is gained via emotionality and the vividness of the message. They might only have small budgets, minimal advertising, and limited distribution channels, but fan productions may, just like mainstream pop cultural productions, reach numerous consumers and leave an (at least emotional) mark on their perception of the war past.

Fan productions are heavily influenced by mainstream popular culture, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of form. They reflect fashions and trends present in both mainstream and fan culture. Manga aesthetics is a natural choice for illustrating Vocaloid compositions, fan music or war-themed short stories. This is why Hatsune Miku can appear as a soldier in a video. The concept of the personification of weapons,

military vessels and vehicles in a cute *moe* form has found a solid place in war-themed fan productions. This has enabled affective attachment towards humanized military objects. It introduces *kawaii* (cute) aesthetics into wartime representations, which is difficult to achieve if the creator realistically presents historical elements. Relationships between officers in fan productions can also have a homoerotic undertone. Such representations are popular among female *dōjin* creators, but certainly less in mainstream war representation. All these highly familiar elements associated primarily with entertainment, when combined with war narrative, turn it into a 'user-friendly', more approachable 'lite' version of history.

This study has not focused on the consumer/audience reaction to war-themed fan productions, therefore drawing any conclusions concerning the audience and how (or if) they are influenced by the fan works would require further research. However, the sheer number of views and comments posted online under some of the productions show that an audience for this type of media exists and actively engages with the stories presented. Moreover, all the creators that I interviewed stated that they receive feedback from their audience, confirming that the audience actively reacts to the content of fan productions. These works, therefore, share a characteristic of mainstream media in that they are not only products of medialized history, but also carriers of it.

### **Nostalgic pop nationalism and (the lack of) political engagement**

Throughout the thesis I have referred on multiple occasions to the notions of petit/pop nationalism as presented by Sakamoto (2008) and Kayama (2002), as well as 'romantic cynicism', which, according to Kitada Akihiro (2005), characterizes present day nationalism. These authors argue that it is possible to express strong national sentiment and 'love Japan' without political engagement. A closer look at fan creators, the vast majority of whom present conservative historical views but express limited support for state or right wing politics, supports this theory.

In the content that they produce, fan creators present mainly conservative content. As discussed, even though fan production is primarily entertainment, some creators engage in 'ideological activism', from trying to 'make the audience think' of war issues to convincing them to certain views on war history. However, conservative creators

invested in war history are not necessarily supporters of conservative politics. Simultaneously, some of the creators touch upon the issues of contemporary politics. They criticize 'masochistic' school education, support Emperor worship, see Yasukuni worship as a duty of all citizens and perceive China and Korea as hostile countries. Such political agendas tend to overlap with nationalistic content in fan productions (Fig. 14). Many conservative producers however want the audience to consider the sacrifice of the war generation, but distance themselves from contemporary politics. They remain 'apolitical' despite ideological engagement towards war issues. These creators express what I called 'nostalgic pop nationalism'.

'Nostalgic pop nationalists' in their works show fascination with (idealized) Japanese history, pride in it, and deep personal connection to people in the wartime generation, whom they perceive as heroes, victims of difficult times, and positive role models. This admiration can be combined with pacifism, statements that war should never happen again, anti-nuclear views, and open-mindedness towards the discussion about war memories with neighborly countries. Some of these creators are actively trying to separate their pride in wartime technological development and fascination with the technical beauty of warfare from any political aspects of the conflict. They are well aware that it still generates many controversies, but it simply lies outside their interest and affection. In 'nostalgic pop nationalism' young people take pride in the reimagined national past, which they treat selectively as a 'feel good' narrative supporting positive self perception through belonging to the heroic 'imagined community'. Still, it remains apolitical in that there are no expressions of any support for current state actions, for example the laws relating to the right to collective self-defense passed in 2015, and nor do they take a stand in any history-related international affairs, like the comfort women or Yasukuni worship issues. 'Fans of war' are not really denying Japanese war responsibility. They are simply ignoring it and picking only those aspects of the past that fit into a positive image of the past and that can be easily used for the entertaining purpose of fan production.

Although sometimes creators' views are made very clear in the fan production itself, in some cases they are not explicitly stated. Sometimes it is the actual conversation with the creator that reveals their views, not the work itself. For example, two Vocaloid compositions with relatively similar narratives about kamikaze sacrifice can be created by people presenting different levels of political engagement, one tending towards

'nostalgic pop nationalism', and the other presenting support for nationalistic politics. The content of fan production itself, therefore, should not be used as the basis for judgment about the political views of its creator.

The case of fan creators suggests that some young people, while glorifying the war past, are visibly distancing themselves from political conservatism. With many having strong anti-war and anti-nuclear sentiments, they should not all be expected to naturally express conservative or nationalistic political engagement. Billig, in his study of 'banal nationalism' (1995), warned that unnoticed acceptance for national symbols may lead to the filling of these 'empty forms' with meanings by the state. Consequently 'banal' nationalism becomes replaced with its actual, more dangerous form. While this may be the case under specific circumstances, currently in Japan the affect towards the images of the past seems to have limited impact on creators' perceptions of the present day state, and does not result in clear support towards it.

Fan creators have openly and creatively expressed their perception of history via their works, which allows us to identify them as 'nostalgic pop nationalists'. It would be more difficult to state how many of the passive media consumers share similar sentiments, and this would require separate research. It can be stated, however, that 'nostalgic pop nationalism' is an existing tendency among young people that should not be automatically associated with conservative or nationalistic political engagement.

## **Conclusions**

I hope that this study has contributed to a deeper understanding of the role of medialized war memories in the entertaining practices and identity creation of the younger generations of Japanese. I have presented how war history, learned both through historical research and through the consumption of mainstream war-themed pop cultural productions, becomes part of a hobby. Because of its entertaining role and strongly emotional form, the presented narratives are selective and sanitized, and remain clustered in the conservative/nationalistic end of judgmental memory scale (in contrast with mainstream media, that covers the whole spectrum). Emotional attachment to these conservative narratives is not synonymous with support for conservative politics, although it may partially overlap. Fan productions in the era of the

new media can be easily created and shared in ways not available for traditional mainstream products, but they attract similar attention and emotional reactions, and both express and spread national sentiment. The analysis suggests the existence of a demand for positive images of a heroic past among young people that is however not necessarily equivalent to support for the modern state. It points moreover to the necessity of further studies of new media to understand how nationalism is shaped 'from below', and the role that war memories play in it seventy years after the conflict ended.

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