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Contesting Famine: Hunger and Nutrition in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952

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Abstract
This article analyzes both the policy debates within the American Occupation over famine, food relief and nutrition in Occupied Japan (1945-52) and the contested terms in which the debate was conducted. Conflict arose over muddled accounting of food intake in calories, a rampant black market that suggested a failure of equitable distribution, and the absence of serious unrest despite imports falling short of minimal stated requirements. Occupation authorities questioned estimates made by the Japanese government. There was internal disagreement among American authorities in Japan and between interested parties in Washington, as well as among the Allies in the Far Eastern Commission. Herbert Hoover's Famine Emergency Committee of 1946 sounded an alarm, and the Food and Fertilizer Mission of February 1947 marked a shift away from rather crude quantitative measures of caloric intake to more subtle qualitative ones of dietary balance and combinations of nutrients. The Occupation's chief concern then became the dearth of animal protein. Attempts to correct this shortfall by reestablishing Japan's fishing and whaling industries proved unpopular with U.S. allies. The Occupation preferred to champion the success of its school lunch program, whose core component – powdered skim milk imported from the United States – was viewed as an invaluable weapon in the Cold War.

Keywords
Black market, famine, food relief, Herbert Hoover, nutrition, Occupied Japan, school lunch program

As David Arnold succinctly puts it in his classic survey, "Food was, and continues to be, power in a most basic, tangible and inescapable form."[1] And yet there is little mention of food and its politics in most studies of the Allied Occupation of Japan.[2] This neglect is all the more surprising since the issues

[1] David Arnold, *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 3.

[2] The rare exception is a chapter in a recent edited collection, in which Stephen Fuchs notes the failure of historians to examine how SCAP and the Japanese government attempted to tackle the food shortage during this period. Steven J. Fuchs, "Feeding the Japanese: Food Policy, Land Reform, and Japan's Economic Recovery," in Mark E. Caprio and Yoneyuki Sugita,

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of food, diet and nutrition lay at the very heart of the Occupation both as practical problems and also as rhetorical ones. They were central to the reform program itself, which equated healthier Japanese with surer democratic potential. Much more than the well-known programs of demilitarization and democratization, Japanese accounts of this period are imbued with a palpable sense of hunger that captures the experience of defeat. The threat of famine, disease, and unrest became a source of great controversy in the context of an Allied occupation which worked indirectly, through the Japanese government. While the Japanese government showed little restraint in demanding large quantities of food aid, the Occupation authorities internally cast doubt on some of its alarmist claims but resorted to similar bleak scenarios in their own representations to Washington. There was also an international dimension. Some of the U.S. allies objected to what they perceived to be the Occupation's indulgent attitude toward a country that had left much of East Asia in a parlous state.

The focus of this article is the anxieties, real or contrived, among Americans involved in the Occupation of Japan about the implications of "acute" or "chronic" malnutrition. These were reflected in twin obsessions with counting calories and balancing diets. Andrew Gordon's well-regarded textbook on modern Japanese history is typical in recording that "millions of people faced starvation" and "Thousands actually starved to death."[3] This article does not address the validity of such statements but will argue that at the time such claims commonly reflected political agendas and rarely captured the complexity of the food supply situation. These claims were advanced by Japanese newspaper reports that dodged the censor's ban on "overplaying starvation," Japanese Communists keen to capitalize on widespread hunger, or the appeals of Occupation officials to Washington for more food aid. The Occupation's Public Health and Welfare Section justified food aid in terms of the positive messages conveyed by U.S. generosity as much as in terms of exigent circumstances, the details of which were often glossed over. These appeals combined sympathetic assessments of food shortfalls in Japan with more critical appraisals of Japanese culture and Japanese diet. The Occupation's willingness to identify itself with Japanese claims of imminent starvation and social breakdown provoked scepticism and opposition among Washington officials and America's allies. The reluctance of Japanese authorities to crack down on the pervasive black market appeared to them as evidence of bad faith. The confusion and

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eds., *Democracy in Occupied Japan: The US Occupation and Japanese Politics and Society* (London: Routledge, 2007), 26.

[3] Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 228.

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conflict over these issues is reflected in a historiographical reluctance to explore them, perhaps reinforced by a general conceptual and political opaqueness over famine and nutrition, which continues down to the present day.

The opening section of this article examines interpretive problems relating to famine and briefly sketches out the rising importance of nutrition in interwar and wartime Japan. This will serve to contextualize its principal theme, the politics of food relief and the Occupation's political management of nutrition. The problem was invoked most powerfully in relation to Japan's children, whose perceived poor health cast them as victims of Japan's militarism and whose recovery to at least prewar norms would champion the success of peace and democracy.

Famine and Nutrition in Historical Perspective

There is little agreement on what constitutes a "famine" and how it differs from a shortage of food. Wrestling with the imprecision of these and related terms, Stephen Devereux helpfully defines "chronic malnutrition" as "nothing more than a poorly balanced diet, lacking in essential nutrients," while "undernutrition" is the physical syndrome associated with prolonged food deprivation." Neither of these amounts to "starvation" or "famine," he contends. The distinction is one of scale, famine being "a crisis of mass starvation."[4]

David Arnold adds that famine is more than "severe malnutrition," "acute food shortages," or "extreme hunger" since these terms fail to capture "the urgency and abhorrence, the sense of crisis and despair."[5] Arnold reminds us of the physiological and social "intertwining of epidemics and famines," even bringing the two together in order to capture their respective meanings: "If hunger can be likened to disease, famine constitutes its epidemic rather than endemic state, the multiplication of existing conditions of inequality, poverty and malnutrition into a crisis of massive proportions."[6] Cormac O Grada defines famine in much less dramatic terms – as "a shortage of food or purchasing power that leads directly to excess mortality from starvation or hunger induced diseases."[7]

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[4] M. K. Bennett, "Famine," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (London: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), 322. Stephen Devereux, *Theories of Famine* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 13.

[5] Arnold, *Famine*, 6.

[6] Ibid., 7, 23.

[7] Cormac O Grada, *Famine: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4.

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Problems of definition befog discussions of the causes of famine. Amartya Sen, who has done seminal work on this subject since the late 1970s, argues that "Starvation is the characteristic of some people not *having* enough to eat. It is not the characteristic of there *being* not enough to eat. While the latter can be a cause of the former, it is but one of many *possible* causes."[8] This sheds light on the true nature of modern famine, occasioned by changes in what Sen calls "entitlements" rather than a deficit of food *per se*. With reference to this "semantic confusion," together with "allegedly deliberate misapplication of the term by some governments to elicit aid" more recently, Robert Dirks concludes that "the concept of famine has clearly been politicized."[9]

Interpretations of food and nutrition more generally also betray strong cultural and political overtones. The science of nutrition which originated in Europe and the United States adopted the so-called "thermodynamic paradigm," representing food as fuel for the human motor. This approach distinguished between protein, fats, and carbohydrates (macronutrients) as specific sources of heat and energy measured in calories.[10] Crucial to this quantitative approach to nutrition was the research of the American Wilbur Atwater, who began experiments in 1896. Atwater deployed a calorimeter, a small chamber packed with scientific instruments, in which a subject was put through particular paces and fed a selection of foods to measure their efficiency in generating energy. This procedure highlighted grain, meat, and dairy products at the expense of fruit, vegetables, and fish.[11]

This selective and quantitative approach was undermined around the time of World War I. The detection of vitamins (micronutrients) and deficiency diseases recommended "a new biochemical emphasis on the quality, as opposed to the quantity, of food," so permitting a distinction between what became known as *mal*nutrition and the more familiar *under*nutrition.[12] An uneasy tension emerged during the interwar years between the thermodynamic and biochemical models of nutrition and their associated emphases of counting calories and balancing diets. The discipline of nutrition assumed a larger profile as its implications for domestic government and colonial rule became ever more evident and pressing.

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[8] Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 40-41.

[9] Robert Dirks, "Famine and Disease," in Kenneth F. Kiple, ed., *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 162.

[10] James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 84.

[11] Nick Cullather, "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie," *American Historical Review* 112 (2007), 340, 345.

[12] Vernon, *Hunger*, 89.

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Indeed, the entwined issues of social deprivation and imperial expansion explain the Japanese state's determination to improve dietary standards during the 1920s and 1930s. "Rice riots" over the price of rice had erupted in July 1918 and lasted two months, exhibiting a scale and intensity without equal in Japan's modern history.[13] Pamphlets with titles like "Recipes for rice surrogates" went along with fundamental policy shift in the direction of imperial self-sufficiency in Japanese-style rice. Formation of the Imperial Government Institute for Nutrition, one of the first of its kind in the world, signaled "the increasing involvement of the Japanese state in the diet of its citizens."[14]

Instrumental in the creation of the Institute was Saiki Tadasu, recipient of a Ph.D. from Yale University and a nutritionist of international renown. Saiki was determined to establish dietetics or nutrition as a science in its own right with a solid research base, and to demonstrate how its findings and conclusions could be shared with the Japanese public (and the wider international community), in order to produce real improvements in diet and health. Saiki edited one of the few reports on nutrition for the Health Organization of the League of Nations in 1926. Entitled *Progress of the Science of Nutrition in Japan*, the report highlighted the need to marry judgments about "organic requirements" with the reality of "national economy" and available resources.[15] Fully aware that some Japanese went hungry, Saiki was realistic about the challenges he and other nutritionists faced. Japan as a country was "relatively small and poor," its food supplies always "an agonising problem for statesmen and hygienists alike." His aim was to draw up a "food code," although not perfect, would correct some of the deficiencies of the Japanese diet, particularly its over-dependence on starchy foods like rice, barley, and potatoes at the expense of animal protein and fat intake.

Saiki acknowledged the contributions made by the Meiji-era military doctors Mori Ōgai (also a leading literary figure) and Takaki Kanehiro to improving the food supply of the army and navy. The demands of war and military expansionism necessitated a more eclectic mix of foods, including Japanese, Chinese, and Western ingredients. According to Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, the military diet was far superior to that of most civilians. By 1929, a Japanese

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[13] Michael Lewis, *Rioters and Citizens: Mass Protest in Imperial Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), xvii.

[14] Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 121. Regarding the policy of imperial self-sufficiency, see Penelope Francks, "Rice for the Masses: Food Policy and the Adoption of Imperial Self-sufficiency in Early Twentieth-century Japan," *Japan Forum* 15 (2003).

[15] League of Nations Health Organization, *Progress of the Science of Nutrition in Japan* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1926), 5-6.

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soldier's daily energy requirement was an estimated 4,000 calories, more if he was engaged in combat, and there was no way that this could be supplied by traditional fare alone. Cwiertka estimates that around 2,600 calories could be provided by rice, the remaining deficit best met – in terms of cost and nourishment – by "large-scale adoption of foreign cooking techniques, such as deep-frying, pan-frying and stewing, and foreign ingredients, such as meat, lard and potatoes."[16]

Just as important as these advances in military nutrition was a rising awareness of the importance of proper food standards for children. The Education Ministry showed this concern in its funding for primary school canteens, numbering 12,000 throughout Japan by 1940. Likewise, the Secondary School Law of 1943 demonstrated a commitment to spreading nutritional awareness. The curriculum was grounded in science and admirably practical, with new textbooks estimating the nutritional worth of particular dishes.[17] By this time, however, the war made ingredients hard to attain. The only supplies which were increasing were sweet potatoes and white potatoes, together with those of beans and soybeans. Everything else was becoming scarcer, particularly fruit, meat and eggs, oils and fats, fish, milk products, and sugar.[18] Availability of dairy products was affected by falling imports and the use of domestic fodder crops for human consumption. The steady decline in supplies of fish – as the key source of animal protein – was particularly serious. This was largely due to the requisitioning of fishing vessels by the Japanese military.

Supplies of white and sweet potatoes were not vulnerable – as were many other foodstuffs – to naval blockade as Japanese consumers could depend on local farmers or their own "victory" gardens for provision of these versatile foods. That was not the case with soybeans, nearly three-quarters of which came from abroad, chiefly from Manchuria. The increasing quantities available for consumption testify to a commitment by the Japanese government to offset declining supplies of rice with soybeans.[19] Rice was the key staple food, accounting for more than 50 percent of calories, the bulk of carbohydrate content and a substantial proportion of protein intake, and was obviously the government's priority. This priority is reflected in comparatively small swings in its supply compared with other foodstuffs. Indeed, scrutiny of data on the chief sources of calories, protein, carbohydrate, and fat during the period

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[16] Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*, 77-78, 82.

[17] Ibid., 122, 135.

[18] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Effects of Bombing on Health and Medical Services in Japan* (Washington, DC: United States Strategic Bombing Survey, 1947), 44.

[19] Jerome B. Cohen, *Japan's Economy in War and Reconstruction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 370.

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1941-45 reveals the degree to which the fundamental balance – or rather imbalance – of Japanese diets was not significantly altered by the war. In Britain in 1943, carbohydrates contributed only 52 percent of total calories, but for Japanese in 1943, on average rice, other grains, and potatoes continued to provide more than three-quarters of calories.[20]

The Japanese government was fully aware of the vital importance of rice as the mainstay of the Japanese diet, and moved quickly to control its supply. As non-food producers, the residents of Japan's six major cities (Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe) were the first to experience rice rationing in April 1941; the system expanded to include the whole country in February 1942, affecting even farmers or "self-suppliers."[21] The priority for the authorities was to meet the requirements of the "staple ration," namely 2.3 *go* (1 *go* equivalent to 0.18 liters) of rice per person per day. According to Thomas Havens, the government's efforts paid off, because "the state somehow managed to meet this basic ration through thick and thin until the last months of the war."[22] However, in order to achieve this goal, it resorted to the expedient of "adulteration," that is to say, the substitution of other grains or potatoes for rice.

The diversion of these foods into the staple ration made them scarcer on the open market or the "free list," so squeezing supplies of those foods that originally supplemented the rice ration.[23] In any case, the depth of the staple food supply crisis, compounded by a poor crop in 1944, was grave enough in July 1945 to force the government to reduce the staple food ration by 10 percent to 2.1 *go* – effective from 11 July 1945 for Japanese outside the six major cities and from 11 August for those city dwellers.

By comparison, the distribution of so-called "supplementary foods" (fruits, vegetables, fish, soybean products) was looser and more haphazard and as the war situation deteriorated became increasingly ineffective. Of course, perishable foods needed to be transported quickly amid an increasingly dislocated economy and dysfunctional transport network, particularly in the closing months of the war. Still, the main obstacle to fair distribution was the growing black market, which "expanded with each new level of control, gradually becoming a structure where protest against wartime sacrifice intertwined with

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[20] Strategic Bombing Survey, *Effects of Bombing*, 54, 56.

[21] Owen Griffiths, "Need, Greed, and Protest in Japan's Black Market, 1938-49," *Journal of Social History* 35 (2002), 828.

[22] Thomas R. H. Havens, *Valley of Darkness: the Japanese People and World War Two* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 116.

[23] Bruce F. Johnston with Mosaburo Hosoda and Yoshio Kusumi, *Japanese Food Management in World War Two* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1953),162.

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nutritional necessity." An estimated 80 percent of perishable foods ended up in black market channels.[24]

The government was caught in a vicious circle: determination to safeguard the staple ration meant that as imports declined, it had to demand higher quotas of rice and rice substitutes from its farmers. Farmers then withheld and hoarded produce to feed themselves and to profit from any surplus by selling directly on the black market, so reducing supplies in legitimate channels and strengthening demand elsewhere. As a result, the status of so-called "self-suppliers" was greatly enhanced at the expense of city dwellers, the great majority of whom increasingly journeyed to rural areas to buy food directly from farmers. The advantageous position of many of those in the countryside underlines the difficulty of generalizing about hunger and malnutrition in wartime Japan. So much depended on local availability of foods and, of course, disposable income that many of those with low or fixed incomes found the black market beyond their reach. It can be assumed that their share of nutrients fell below the national average.

The resonance of famine and the history of nutrition in prewar and wartime Japan provide the vital backcloth to the Occupation drama over food. Before the Public Health and Welfare Section, and its energetic head, Crawford Sams, could focus their energies on reforming Japan's "faulty nutritional patterns,"[25] they first had to confront the specter of famine, the food supply crisis that emerged with frightening clarity in the spring of 1946. In short, counting calories had to be their first priority.

Counting Calories: Staving Off Starvation

In the food emergency of 1945-47, the subject of food relief was politically charged, highly contentious and, perhaps most importantly, pivotal to the processes of reform and economic rehabilitation that historians of the Allied Occupation of Japan have conventionally highlighted. The very imprecision of the language used and the different meanings attached to various descriptors capture the impact of the food shortages. In the spring of 1946 and the following year, food stocks, particularly of rice harvested the previous autumn, were nearly exhausted and the shortfall could only be corrected, it was argued, by immediate and large-scale imports of grains. The documents refer to

[24] Griffiths, "Need, Greed and Protest," 828; Cohen, *Japan's Economy*, 378.

[25] Crawford F. Sams, *"Medic" The Mission of an American Military Doctor in Occupied Japan and Wartorn Korea* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 54.

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"undernutrition," "chronic malnutrition," and "acute malnutrition," each of these terms diagnosing particular kinds of problems and their associated remedies. "Undernutrition," as mentioned earlier, suggested a protracted state of inadequate food supplies, more often understood in quantitative rather than qualitative terms – a fundamental, "slow burning" problem that required thoughtful, long-term solutions. Likewise, "chronic malnutrition" indicated a long-term, persistent dietary imbalance that reduced quality of life and longevity, and necessitated fundamental reconfiguration of the diet. Only when the term "acute malnutrition" was used was the specter of famine invoked. This term warned that urban Japanese, who could not supplement the staple food ration sufficiently by purchasing food on the black market or growing their own vegetables, were on the verge of starvation. The term further implied all the political risks – threats of civil unrest and epidemic disease that might seriously disrupt the Occupation's program of reform and necessitate some kind of military "surge." The response to "acute malnutrition" therefore had to be immediate, and in a dietary sense an indiscriminate commitment to supplying any food available regardless of its nutritional value, to prevent hunger becoming starvation. "Counting calories" was thus the approach adopted during the period 1945-47. The quantity of food available mattered much more than its quality.

Even then, the discussion was politically contentious. The various calculations being made and the judgments that flowed from them often betrayed a rather cavalier use of the available data and confusion about the meaning of different datasets. For example, the Occupation's Natural Resources Section prepared an extensive briefing paper for ex-President Herbert Hoover, who visited Japan in May 1946 with other members of the U.S. Famine Emergency Committee.[26] The report began by cautioning that "due to considerable confusion that has been evident in the use of the term 'calorie' pertaining to the food situation throughout the world, it is considered advisable to point out the manner in which the term will be used throughout this presentation."[27]

[26] Hoover was considered an expert on nutrition and food aid, having been instrumental in famine relief after World War I. Truman appointed him as chairman of the Famine Emergency Committee. Japan was one of twenty-five countries visited by Hoover as part of a global survey of the famine situation. For more details, see Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 142-53.

[27] "Japanese food situation 1946," prepared for Herbert Hoover and members of Famine Emergency Committee, 1 May 1946, National Diet Library (NDL), Natural Resources Section (NRS), fiche no. 023310. Documents of other sections of GHQ, Public Health and Welfare Section (PHW) and Economic and Scientific Section (ESS), will also be cited with their fiche numbers.

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The document then explained that in order to avoid "poor, muddled comparisons," the term "calories" had to be related to three distinct measures – the caloric consumption requirement, the caloric equivalent of the food ration, and the staple food component of the ration expressed in calories. The starting point for the "caloric consumption requirement" was the basal metabolic rate, defined as the bare minimum of calories needed for a human at rest, which for a Japanese adult was scientifically determined as 1,280 calories, 82 percent of the minimum caloric requirement for Westerners. Of course, allowance had then to be made for the energy requirements of work and daily life, and the calculation made by the Occupation in this regard was an average of 1,800 calories for the normal consumer. This average had to accommodate the needs of workers in heavy industries like mining, who needed a minimum of 2,832 calories, at one end, and the lesser requirements of "sedentary workers, or non-workers, women and children," who could get by on 1,550 calories, at the other. It was explained that 1,800 calories was a very conservative figure, deemed to be 10 percent less than that required for light work, and "does not in any way represent the caloric equivalent of the ration supplied to that portion of the population which is rationed."

Indeed, the caloric value of the ration, including staple and supplementary foods, was stated to be only about 55 percent of the food actually consumed in December 1945, the balance deriving from the black market, home gardens, and gifts from friends and relatives. The third and most important term used in caloric measures and the calorie debates was the "staple food ration expressed in calories," its importance deriving from the heavy reliance of Japanese on rice, other grains, and potatoes, accounting for more than 80 percent of the calories consumed. This measure was "most often confused with the total caloric consumption, particularly in view of the fact that wheat, rice, corn and potatoes are the items most frequently shipped into countries requiring food relief."

The implication throughout this discussion of terminology was that other countries' needs had been overstated due to failure to distinguish properly, deliberately or otherwise, between the various measures used. Later, in October 1947, responding to requests from Washington for hard evidence of famine conditions, including pictures of emaciated children, to justify further U.S. food imports, Sams himself complained about perceived exaggeration of hunger elsewhere. He declared that honesty was the best policy even though "other countries have not hesitated in the past, and will not hesitate at this time to use distorted and half truths to build up a picture of serious mass starvation which in reality does not exist." He went on, venting his frustration that "such techniques of colossal fraud are considered necessary in order to induce the

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American people to support necessary relief programs."[28] Such strong language was typical of Crawford Sams, an experienced military medic with an impressive career history, including wartime service in the Middle East and North Africa. Sams was scathing about Japan's record in public health, saw his mission in Japan as one of modernization along American lines, and was vigorously anti-Communist, viewing New Dealers within the Occupation with much suspicion.

The challenge to the Occupation from the beginning was to convince Washington of the desperate need for food imports. In turn, this necessitated endless caloric calculations designed to underline the extraordinarily slight margin existing between hunger and starvation among urban Japanese. While there was no "colossal fraud" on the part of the Occupation, there seems to have been a perhaps understandable willingness to err on the side of caution, to trust in the Japanese government and their statistics, and a reluctance to tackle the intractable problem of the black market. All these issues kept coming up in the Occupation's exchanges on food relief with Washington and the American allies on the Far Eastern Commission.

Rather frantic discussions began with a "teletype conference" in early March 1946. The key players were Robert Cogswell, chief of the Nutrition Branch of the Pentagon's Civil Public Health and Nutrition Division, and Paul Howe of the Occupation's Public Health and Welfare Section. In a letter from Cogswell to Howe which recorded the chief issues arising from the conference, the Pentagon official remarked that "I need not tell you that the major reason for our agitation over the food and nutrition situation in Japan stems from the rather critical world food shortage as affected by General [Douglas] MacArthur's statement of stupendous food requirements." The requested amount was indeed immense at 3.7 million metric tons (of which 2.7 million were cereals), but considerably less than the original request of the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, which was a staggering 6.12 million metric tons in rice equivalents. According to Bruce Johnston of the Occupation's Economic and Scientific Section, the Supreme Commander's request betrayed a very poor grasp of the world food situation; it represented the opening shot in what turned out to be a rather persistent wrangle between Washington and Tokyo in the early years of the Occupation. In any case, Cogswell noted the activity generated by MacArthur's bid, "the various cooperating agencies ... attempting to get as much information as possible bearing on the subject

[28] Memo for record, 16 Oct. 1947; subject: information requested for United States food drive, NDL PHW 01245.

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from as many different directions as possible." The outcome was predictable – "a welter of conflicting reports to the extent that I now seriously doubt whether anyone knows what the true circumstances are anywhere in the world."[29]

After alluding to "a similar but less acute situation ... in Germany," Cogswell then cast doubt on the accuracy of the Occupation's cables, wondering why if urban Japanese were reported to be currently consuming 2,000 calories, the ration could not be reduced so as to "extend locally-held food supplies as much as possible." Staggering the flow of food was obviously essential, given that rice and sweet potatoes – the key staples – were harvested in the autumn, and, even allowing for careful release of stocks, would run out in the spring or summer unless the gap was bridged by imports, which historically amounted to around 15 percent of consumption. Cogswell estimated the daily caloric needs of the "normal" Japanese to be 1,400 calories per day, but then complained about the confusion arising from "a caloric statement for Japan" that "appears to be in terms of average consumption for the whole of Japan, presumably including infants, children, old people, heavy workers etc., as well as the so-called normal consumer." He could have added the lack of a distinction between self-suppliers of food and those in the towns and cities, who depended on rations and their own resourcefulness to eke out an existence. Finally, Cogswell hinted at the politics of feeding an ex-enemy alongside relief for allies and liberated areas, before closing with the pertinent question of how much reliance could be placed on the Occupation's data when it originated with Japanese who might be "trying to distort the picture to their advantage." The conference had clearly raised issues that would remain problematic for the Occupation – the need for a sober assessment of the food problem on the basis of properly understood criteria, the importance of smoothing out caloric intake over the rice year (1 November-31 October), the politics of helping a wartime enemy, and the need to treat Japanese government estimates with some scepticism.

MacArthur's demands created such anxiety that Washington dispatched a high-level "special Japanese food commission" to ascertain the gravity of the situation. Headed by Colonel Raymond Harrison, the commission represented the Departments of State, War, and Agriculture. The urgency was such that Harrison felt compelled to radio his recommendations to his superiors in Washington on 28 March.[30] Harrison alerted them to the likelihood of a

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[29] Army Service Forces, Office of the Surgeon General, 11 Mar. 1946, NDL PHW 02039; "Japanese food situation 1946," 1 May 1946; Fuchs, "Feeding the Japanese," 28; and Johnston, *Japanese Food Management*, 214.

[30] Memo for Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of State, 28 Mar. 1946, subject: final report on food situation in Japan, NDL ESS(C) 00095.

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"period beginning in May and extending through July when there could be almost no issue of rationed food in deficit [urban] areas." He stated that the authorized staple food ration of 2.1 *go*, operating since the summer of 1945, represented just 1,050 calories, and that this could not be sustained beyond 1 May 1946 "due to small stocks and relatively small collections resulting from exhaustion of supplies in the hands of farmers." Remarking that the Japanese government had revised its requirements for imports downward to 300,000 tons per month (May-October) due to world shortages, he warned that these represented the minimum. Harrison nevertheless recommended a figure of 200,000 tons per month (June-August in the first instance), which he considered to be the "absolute minimum requirements." He justified this aid by reminding his audience that the 1945 harvest of rice and other grains was "the lowest in 30 years" due to adverse weather conditions, a dearth of fertilizer and a shortage of labor, and that these problems had been compounded by "negligible" food imports. The seriousness of the situation was underlined by the calculation that the total amount of food available to individual Japanese was down 41.4 percent compared to prewar years. The "knockout blow" was delivered toward the end of the radio when Harrison warned that "the impact of this reduction will fall almost entirely on urban population resulting in a reduction in their caloric intake to starvation levels." Finally, he observed that a commitment be made as soon as possible "so that the present uncertainty which tends to increase hoarding and slow down collections can be eliminated and effective planning of rationing made possible."[31] This argument would surface again the following year, when the Japanese government would insist that imports were a key corrective to hoarding and black market dealings.

Despite Harrison's dire warnings, the briefing paper for Hoover prepared more than a month later noted that "receipts to date are extremely short," just 101,250 metric tons of wheat and 5,080 of surplus flour in April, only 13,800 tons of which had been released to the Japanese government. Only about 50,000 of 66,000 tons of cereals on the way were expected to arrive in Japan in May, the balance of 16,000 tons being diverted to Korea to meet the food crisis there. The failure to respond to Harrison's urgent recommendations, it was argued, would make it very difficult for the Occupation "to prevent disease and unrest." The starting point for these assumptions was an average diet of 1,800 calories, providing 1,550 calories for the urban consumer, consisting of rationed and "supplemental foods." This presupposed a rural diet of around 2,100 calories. In the absence of the requested imports, Occupation officials

[31] Outgoing message from SCAP (Harrison), to WARCOS, attached to memo cited in ibid., NDL ESS(C) 00095.

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claimed, urban Japanese would be "reduced to an average consumption level of 700 calories per day" from May to September. As had been made clear, "such a level of consumption would not be sufficient to maintain life," resulting in "mass starvation," which in turn would have "an incalculable effect upon American prestige not just in the Far East but the world over" – the United States would suffer an "enormous loss of prestige."[32]

It seems that these arguments had the desired effect as imports rose significantly thereafter, amounting to 330,000 tons in July and August 1946,[33] and releases falling just short of the 400,000 tons mark (388,022 tons),[34] the discrepancy presumably explained by the stocks of imported food held back from previous months. During September, the final month of the 1946 rice year, 114,360 tons of imported cereals/beans and 67,300 tons of canned foods were released for Japanese consumption. Still, the total amount of imported food released from April to October 1946 was 687,166 tons,[35] a figure not much above what Harrison had defined as the absolute minimum required for the three-month period of June-August 1946 (600,000 tons). World food shortages, Japan's status as an enemy country, standing in line after Allied nations and liberated areas, and the Occupation's delay in putting in a credible bid, all account for the limited imports that materialized.

Another factor may have been the reluctance to offend American allies. The briefing paper for Hoover reported that "the 600,000 emergency program has recently been placed in jeopardy by the Far Eastern Commission which has been advocating the diversion of Japan's interim allocation."[36] It later transpired that the British embassy informed the Department of State in December 1946 of its government's "anxiety" about the "per capita food supply now available to the Japanese people" being "much greater than that available to the people of territories in South East Asia for which the UK is responsible, a disparity concerning which they are liable to attack in Parliament and the Press." The statement called for more rigorous collection of crops, claiming that "for every 100 calories per diem taken from self-suppliers, imports could be reduced by 350,000 tons per annum," and noting that farmers made up less than half of the population but consumed "some 70 percent of indigenous

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[32] "Japanese food situation 1946," 1 May 1946.

[33] Johnston, *Japanese Food Management*, 215.

[34] According to the October 1946 issue of the *Summations of Non-military Activities in Japan*, 182, the releases of imported food for July and August amounted to 174,708 and 213,314 tons, respectively. The bulk of this was cereals (157,435 and 163,371 tons in July and August, respectively) but it also included canned goods (17,273 and 49,943 tons).

[35] Ibid.

[36] "Japanese food situation 1946," 1 May 1946.

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supplies." The British government urged the Supreme Commander to pressure the Japanese government "to improve their controls and bring about equitable distribution by declaring that imports of food were conditional upon such action."[37] Perhaps the British took their cue from William Ball, the British Commonwealth representative on the Allied Council for Japan in Tokyo, who argued that the "food crisis of the Occupation has been mainly a crisis of distribution, not of production."[38] While the Occupation authorities denied the validity of these claims, they were fully aware that actual food relief had fallen far short of the minimum amounts requested without the predicted disease and unrest occurring.

The lesson was not lost on officials in Washington. In common with the British, they faulted the Occupation for failing to hold the Japanese government properly to account over domestic food crops. Enter Palmer T. Hogenson, who visited Japan in September 1946. As a representative of the War Department, his brief was to review the Occupation's methodology for estimating food supplies. When he asked why, if shipments were far from requirements during the spring and summer of 1946, there had been "no disturbance beyond effective control," his hosts identified a long list of factors. The most obvious one was the tendency of the Japanese government to understate crop yields and underestimate stocks of staple crops. More inventive ones gave credit to the solidity of the Japanese family system (rural Japanese taking care of urban relatives), the disproportionate impact of canned foods (providing more nourishment than imports of cereals), the vegetables provided by home gardens, the obedience of Japanese to warnings from MacArthur not to riot, and – perhaps most inventively – the large number of unemployed, whose low level of activity meant they "could exist on a minimum subsistence diet."

Although he urged the Occupation authorities to exercise greater care in bidding for scarce food supplies on the basis of Japanese government habitual pessimism, Hogenson was more exercised about the broader implications of food shortages. He stressed their detrimental effect on Japanese economic recovery ("scrounging for food is an excellent method for wasting time and energy") and urged additional rations for workers in strategic industries. Particularly depressing was the prospect of "larger total supplies" being required during the 1947 rice year (1 November 1946 to 31 October 1947),

[37] British embassy to Department of State, December 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946 Volume VIII The Far East* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1971), 379-81: hereafter cited as *FRUS*.

[38] W. MacMahon Ball, *Japan: Enemy or Ally?* (London: Cassell, 1948), 121.

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because of the repatriation of millions of Japanese and the "normal increase in population" apparently unaffected by war or threat of famine.[39]

In marked contrast to the previous year, the 1946 rice harvest measured up to prewar standards and the sweet potato crop was the best ever.[40] Despite these favorable circumstances, the politics of food relief in the 1947 rice year was much the same. Colonel Harrison visited Japan again, this time as head of a food and fertilizer mission,[41] figures for caloric intake dominated discussions once more, the quantity required rather than the need for food imports *per se* was contested, large-scale imports did not arrive until they were urgently needed in the summer months, and Occupation officials argued with decision-makers in Washington and the American allies, represented on the Far Eastern Commission, about the degree to which indigenous supplies were being maximized. Perhaps prompted by Hogenson, Harrison was a lot more demanding of the Occupation and the Japanese government than he had been previously.

This is evidenced by a rather prickly meeting Harrison called on 11 February 1947 with members of the Japanese government and Bruce Johnston, the responsible official in the Economic and Scientific Section. Harrison chided Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, demanding that "greater effort ... be made to utilize to the maximum and distribute to the ultimate extent possible the food that is produced here in Japan. That would include the stamping out of the black market, particularly in fish." He stated that the mission members "owe it to you to tell you that you ought to do something better in the matter of the food business to keep it equitable between the various economic groups." Casting around for scapegoats for his government's failure to tighten up its collection and rationing systems, Yoshida blamed "communist agitators" and the "labor movement," "very inadequate" government statistics and, most interestingly, uncertainty over whether or not U.S. food imports would materialize. The discussion centred on the black market, the mission members insisting that tackling this problem was the key to maximising indigenous

[39] Palmer T. Hogenson, "Japan-Korea: Final Report and Recommendations," 2 Dec. 1946, NDL ESS(B) 15981.

[40] Johnston, *Japanese Food Management*, 221-22.

[41] The mission was in Japan, 2-27 February, with each member assigned particular areas to write up: Captain Kittredge (nutritional status of the Japanese and Korean populations), Mr. Tuck (collections, distribution and rationing), Colonel Harrison (indigenous production of food and fertilizer), Mr. Koenig (food and fertilizer import requirements), Mr. Whitman (payment for imports by exports), and Mr. Jacob (assistance to Harrison and Koenig). In a memo for the Chief, ESS, 10 Apr. 1947, it was stated by Egekvist, chief of Price Control and Rationing Division, that Harrison and Koenig were "much more critical of SCAP" than the others, NDL PHW 01246.

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food stocks. The Japanese responded that publicity about staple food imports would reduce diversion of food into black market channels, because the farmers would "see that prices of rice and staple foods will come down in the future."[42]

The mission members were not convinced by the Japanese government's case, their final report calling for "a vigorous and impartial program for collecting, distributing and rationing all available foodstuffs" as well as "an aggressive long range program for increasing production of agricultural products, fish and fertilizer." The Occupation itself was implicitly criticized for not doing enough "to ensure that collection quotas are achieved and black market activities curtailed," and the deployment of military government personnel to monitor these activities was recommended. Moreover, the report made clear that imports could not be taken for granted, recommending that SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers) "prepare plans for emergency action in the event of partial or total curtailment of US funds appropriated for purchase of Japan's food import needs."[43] At the same time that Sams and others were irritated by the mission's report, privately describing it as "most superficial ... and based largely on speculative assumptions,"[44] MacArthur nevertheless wrote to Prime Minister Yoshida on 22 March 1947, complaining that "black marketing of food and failure to realize full collections are only two manifestations of general maldistribution" and warning that "outside assistance is contingent upon full utilization of indigenous resources."[45]

Clearly, the Supreme Commander was under pressure from Washington to confront the drain of scarce foodstuffs caused by the black market, but just as important was the need to reassure the U.S. allies on the Far Eastern Commission, who were very angry about what was perceived to be the United States' "preferential treatment" of the Japanese. At the center of the controversy was an "obnoxious paragraph" in a Commission's committee paper on food that stated that the "Supreme Commander should make it clear to the Japanese people that many countries were suffering from dire shortages of foodstuffs largely due to Japanese aggression and in many countries devastated by Japan the diet of the people was inferior to that of the Japanese."[46] The content was deemed to be "unacceptable" to the American government,

[42] Hearing called for 1400 hours, 11 Feb. 1947, between members of the Food and Fertilizer Mission with SCAP representative and members of the Japanese cabinet, NDL PHW 02843.

[43] "Summary of Harrison Mission Findings," 4 Apr. 1947, NDL PHW 01246.

[44] "Comment on Harrison Food Mission Report," 16 Mar. 1947, ibid., 02843.

[45] MacArthur to Yoshida, *FRUS 1947 Volume VI The Far East* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 192.

[46] Acheson to Atcheson, 24 Mar. 1947, ibid., 194.

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largely because it would undermine their efforts to secure funds from Congress to support the Occupation.[47]

These political difficulties were reflected in the full report of the Food and Fertilizer Mission, which demanded more of the Occupation and its Japanese partner but nevertheless acknowledged that regardless of improvements in indigenous food production and equitable distribution, food imports would still be essential. Of 1,473,000 tons of cereals and 331,000 tons of other foodstuffs (such as dry skim milk, pulses, fats and oils) allocated to Japan, South Korea, and the Ryukyu Islands for the first half of 1947, the report recommended that 1,100,000 tons of imported food should be reserved for Japan.[48] A detailed breakdown of needs distinguished between around 32 million "self-suppliers and partial self-suppliers" (the rural population), who would consume at least 2,120 calories per person per day, about 34.5 million urban Japanese "non-self-suppliers" who would have to make do with an average of 1,492 calories, and just over 11 million citizens receiving "supplementary and special rations." Noting that Japanese data underestimated agricultural production by 5-10 percent, the official figure of a 2 million ton deficit still left a shortfall of at least 1.8 million.[49] The calculations were now informed by a staple food ration that had been increased from 2.1 *go* (1,042 calories) to 2.5 *go* (1,246 calories) on 1 November 1946; the figure of 1,246 calories represented 80 percent of the 1,550 calorie feeding level that had been authorized for Japan.

The assumption was made that the same "12 predominantly urban prefectures" that had consumed the bulk of United States imports in their rations during the spring and summer of 1946 would be similarly dependent during the period May-October 1947.[50] Despite resorting to these familiar calculations of caloric intake, the mission's report represents something of a watershed in the nutritional history of the Occupation by shifting the prime focus from the quantity of food available to its quality. While claiming that "the mission found no evidence of acute malnutrition on a mass basis," the report's

[47] Acheson to Bishop, 11 Mar. 1947, ibid., 373.

[48] According to the relevant issues of the *Summations*, 1,375,730 tons of imported food were released during the period May-October 1947.

[49] "Report on Food and Fertilizer Situation in Japan, Korea and the Ryukyus" by Joint War, State and Agricultural Mission, 4 Apr. 1947, NDL PHW 01246.

[50] The July 1946 issue of *Summations* stated that the Occupation found it necessary to release imported foods in twenty prefectures, imports providing as high as 100 percent of the SFR in Tokyo-to and as little as 2.6 percent in Yamaguchi-ken. The twelve most dependent prefectures in decreasing order were reported to be Tokyo, Hokkdaido, Osaka, Kanagawa, Hyogo, Kyoto, Aomori, Fukuoka, Yamanashi, Nagano, Shizuoka, and Wakayama; the remaining eight were Iwate, Fukushima, Gifu, Chiba, Miyagi, Hiroshima, Fukui, and Yamaguchi.

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content suggests that it found plenty of evidence of "chronic malnutrition." Prompted by the Public Health and Welfare Section's desire to look more at the fundamentals of the problem, the mission's report indicates an important transition in policy goals from counting calories to balancing diets, from rather crude measures of caloric intake to more subtle ones of combinations of nutrients.

Balancing Diets: Promoting Animal Protein

Herbert Hoover's "first concern" had been cereals as they can "furnish 85 percent of an emergency diet,"[51] but the report of the Food and Fertilizer Mission emphasized the sources of animal protein and fats/oils, associated with "supplemental rations," and began to eclipse the all-important issue of the staple food ration. This showed again the tension between the thermodynamic and biochemical approach, which required greater attention to vitamins and minerals as well as the balance between carbohydrates, fats, and protein. What comes across clearly in the mission's findings and the "minority report" of Kittredge and Tuck, which is more focused on nutrition, is the conviction that the nutritional content of the Japanese diet had never been "physiologically adequate," for "even while the caloric intake prior to 1941 was sufficient, there never was enough protein, fats, and other essentials in the average diet of the population."[52]

We will now examine the means by which the Occupation determined these deficiencies, how they sought to correct them, the degree to which their efforts met with success, and the decision to target scarce resources on particular groups, most notably school children.

Mass starvation had been prevented during the 1946 rice year by consumption of rice, sweet potatoes, and imported cereals, a recipe for survival, not healthy living. Nutritional surveys conducted by the Japanese authorities in Tokyo under the Occupation's supervision in December 1945 and February 1946 identified a sample of individuals that crossed gender, age, and class lines. They collected details of daily meal by meal consumption, the composition of the food consumed and the sources of the foodstuffs eaten. At the same time that nutritionists were carefully recording the food consumed over three days by each member of the families selected, teams of Japanese doctors and nurses

[51] Letter to President Truman, 13 May 1946, and signed by Hoover and other members of the Famine Emergency Committee.

[52] "Report on Food and Fertilizer Situation," 4 Apr. 1947.

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conducted physical examinations. "Clinical evidence of malnutrition," the briefing paper for Hoover maintained, is "scientifically and medically determinable, and ... not to be confused with the widely accepted view that weight loss alone is indicative of malnutrition."[53] Indeed, current debates in the early twenty-first century make it clear that individuals can be both obese and malnourished.

In addition to recording height, weight, and pulse rate, the health checks looked for symptoms of the following conditions: edema (swelling of the feet and legs due to excess fluid); cheilosis (inflamed lips and cracking at the corners of the mouth); glossitis (inflammation of the tongue); hyperkeratosis (thickening of the skin); bradycardia (slowing of the heart rate); anemia; loss of knee jerk; chronic diarrhoea; menstrual disturbances; and deficient lactation. The scope of the surveys widened from Tokyo in December 1945 to encompass four other large cities (Nagoya, Kure, Osaka, and Fukuoka) and nineteen prefectures (encompassing rural areas) in February 1946. These results showed rates of just over 10 percent for "loss of knee jerk" in Tokyo, anemia in the four other large cities, cheilosis and edema in the nineteen prefectures category, and around 20 percent for delayed menstruation in Tokyo and the four other cities. Otherwise, the figures tended to be below 5 percent, and were, according to the Hoover briefing paper, "well within the range of those normally found in any average population."[54] In May 1946, the survey's scope was enlarged again to include four additional cities (Sapporo, Sendai, Kanagawa, and Matsuyama) and eight more prefectures, and from February 1948 it covered all cities with a population over 30,000 and the rural areas of all forty-six prefectures. While the various symptoms of malnutrition showed a downward trend over time, there was no appreciable shift in their significance.[55]

Perhaps because these figures did not adequately capture the seriousness of the food situation, more striking statistics on weight loss were increasingly put forward as evidence of a malnutrition crisis. Just under a quarter of the people surveyed in August 1946 were deemed to be "underweight" (29 percent in urban areas and 18 percent in rural areas).[56] The Kittredge-Tuck report expressed this as 25 percent of adults showing "evidence of undernutrition."[57]

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[53] "Japanese food situation 1946," 1 May 1946.

[54] *Summations*, April 1946, 255.

[55] Ibid., August 1946, 234; see tables in Civil Historical Section, *History of the Nonmilitary Activities of the Occupation of Japan*, monograph 19, Public Health (Tokyo: SCAP, 1951), 120 and Appendix 1, I.

[56] *History of the Nonmilitary Activities*, 19:121.

[57] "Report on nutritional requirements, Japan 1947-1948," by Kittredge and Tuck, NDL PHW 01246.

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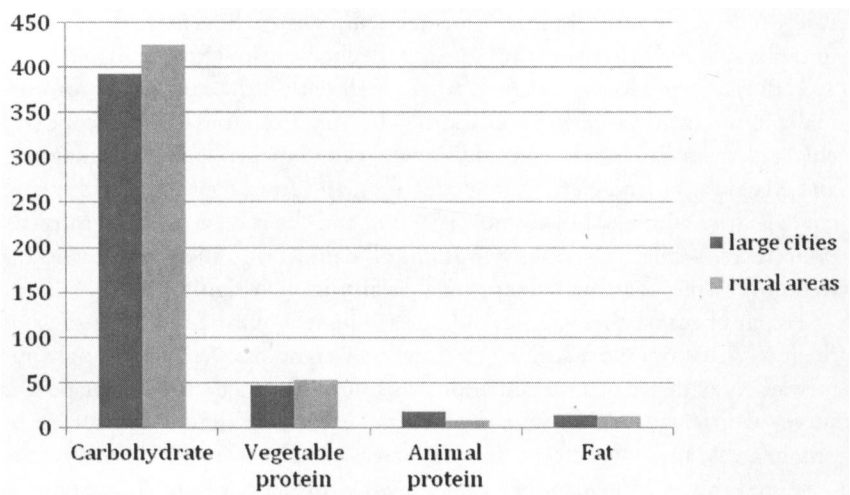
Likewise, the Harrison mission concluded that significant decreases of weight and height showed that two-thirds of children under age six and five-sixths of schoolchildren and adolescents were "suffering from chronic malnutrition." The explanation advanced was that an "indigenous food supply … low in body-building proteins," provided an overall average of less than half the total protein normally required and only one-third of the animal protein necessary for the maintenance of good health.[58]

The starting point for this calculation was a Japanese estimate that protein requirements were 76 grams per capita per day, a quarter of which should be animal proteins.[59] Figure 1, based on data from the nutrition surveys, illustrates levels of vegetable protein and animal protein in 1948 (in grams), together with those for fats and carbohydrates. It highlights the disproportionate contribution of carbohydrates to the Japanese diet, and the favored

Figure 1. Nutritive Value of Food in Grams Consumed Per Capita Daily, 1948.



Source: Public Health and Welfare Section, *Public Health and Welfare in Japan, Annual Summary, 1949, volume II (part 1)*, Table 57.

[58] "Report on Food and Fertilizer Situation," 4 Apr. 1947.

[59] Memo for record, from Warren Leonard, Chief Agricultural Division, 27 Oct. 1945, subject: caloric and protein intake of the Japanese, NDL NRS 11393. According to the Kittredge-Tuck report, this was a nutritional standard set in the 1920s by the Japanese Nutritional Efficiency Committee, National Research Council.

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position of the rural areas (as made clear in the previous section, this advantage was noted by those whose chief concern was caloric intake). Likewise, the so-called "self-suppliers" in the countryside generally had a higher consumption of vegetable protein. As regards animal protein, however, levels are low in the cities but are negligible in the countryside, explaining perhaps why the pattern of malnutrition did not reflect a simple rural-urban divide.

This worried American and Japanese nutritionists alike because the key sources of animal protein – meat, fish, poultry, milk, eggs – represent "complete proteins," combining all the essential amino acids the human body requires for growth and repair. This is not the case with most vegetable sources, and so a variety must be consumed for a "complete" protein profile, but the one exception is soy, which – as *miso*, *oshōyu*, and *tōfu* – could be "diffused more widely through the [Japanese] population than animal protein ever was."[60] The problem was that the bulk of soybeans had come from Manchuria/Manchukuo, a source of supply that ended with Japan's defeat. So when the Harrison mission report of April 1947 noted a slight increase in domestic production of soybeans, this did "not begin to meet Japan's normal soybean requirements." Indeed, the report saw the solution to Japan's deficiency in animal protein elsewhere – with fish and fish products. These were "the most important source of animal protein in the Japanese diet, comparable to meat and dairy products in the western countries."

Harrison and his colleagues commended the Occupation for the progress made during 1946 in reestablishing the Japanese fishing and whaling industry. Nevertheless, they insisted that "the urgency of increasing still further the production of fish and whale meat cannot be overemphasized." While the Natural Resources Section was congratulated for facilitating an annual fish catch of around 3 million tons, this, it was argued, was not the industry's full potential, an annual fish catch target of 5 million tons considered "entirely possible." For this to be achieved, however, the areas in which it was permitted for Japanese vessels to fish would have to be extended and equipment improved.[61] When they advanced Japan's fisheries case, it was not long before the Occupation authorities found themselves once again in conflict with the U.S. allies over food policy. Indeed, a recent study finds that MacArthur "incensed" Japan's Asian neighbors in June 1946 by "nearly doubling Japan's

[60] Susan B. Hanley, *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 85.

[61] "Report on Food and Fertilizer Situation," 4 Apr. 1947. The report states that 23,000 metric tons of whale meat and blubber and 11,000 metric tons of whale oil were produced in 1946.

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fishing zone, citing the exigency of acute food shortage being experienced by the Japanese population." Likewise, the general had no truck with key members of the Far Eastern Commission who objected to the resumption of Japanese whaling.[62]

Presumably, this opposition from other countries reflected not just concerns about their own fishing industries but also irritation that much of Japan's catch was spoiling or disappearing into black market channels. Poor facilities for preservation, storage, and transport of fish from coastal sources to the interior were to blame, but American visitors nevertheless harried the Japanese government about what they regarded as a lack of will. Members of the Harrison mission of 1947 urged the Cabinet to stamp out the black market that was so disruptive of equitable distribution, "particularly true of fish."[63] Indeed, their report stated that "the distribution of fish through legal channels is the weakest link in the entire system of distribution," claiming that the black market devoured 50 percent of the catch. Certainly, this was the conclusion of a British journalist who accompanied a Captain Mooney, the American Food Officer for Kyoto Prefecture, to the port of Maizuru to discover what was happening to record catches of mackerel.[64] The intractable problem of the black market limited any progress in increasing the consumption of animal protein. The average figure increased from 10.5 grams in 1947 to 14.3 grams in 1949 and 17.2 grams in 1950, but the Occupation's official history makes clear, "this increase was attributed largely to constant efforts to increase the flow of fish through official distribution channels."[65]

As the prospects of fundamentally changing Japan's "faulty nutritional patterns" dimmed in late 1946 and early 1947, a return to the prewar standard seemed the most realistic goal. More attention was paid to vulnerable groups, toward which scarce resources could be targeted. The Occupation and the food missions that advised it increasingly looked to the younger generation as the key to achieving some measurable success and perhaps even changing dietary habits. Harrison's report of April 1947 recommended that there be no increase in the staple food ration of 2.5 *go*, but that the Occupation "increase as soon as possible the supplemental rations, especially those for growing children." Responding to stark figures on weight loss and diminished height

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[62] Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, "Occupation Policy and the Japanese Fisheries Management Regime, 1945-1952," in Caprio and Sugita, eds., *Democracy in Occupied Japan*, 54.

[63] Hearing called for 1400 hours, 11 Feb. 1947.

[64] For more detail on this story and others like it, see Christopher Aldous, *The Police in Occupation Japan* (London: Routledge, 1997), 144-47. The journalist was Honor Tracy of the *Manchester Guardian*, who published a record of her experiences in Japan entitled *Kakemono*.

[65] *History of the Nonmilitary Activities*, 19:122.

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among school children and other vulnerable groups, the report stressed that "advantageous use can be made of dried skim milk, especially in connection with the school lunch program in Japan and for use in special feeding of patients in hospitals and institutions."

The school lunch program was the key mechanism for boosting protein intake among children. A solid foundation had been laid by the Japanese Ministry of Education in the 1930s and early 1940s in their previous initiatives to improve child nutrition. The idea of resuming and expanding these programs seems to have come from Maurice Pate, a member of Hoover's food commission, who urged Sams to follow the example of England, where a school lunch program had met with great success. Keen to combat long-term chronic health problems like tuberculosis and rickets, in October 1946 Sams began consulting with representatives of the Japanese Ministries of Education, Finance, and Agriculture, all of whom were fully in accord with the idea.[66] Enthusiasm was one thing, resources were quite another. Sams warned in November 1946 that only 10 percent of the 14,000 tons of protein needed was available.[67] In a letter to Sams dated 1 May 1947, Nathan Koenig of the 1947 food and fertilizer mission highlighted the importance of dry skim milk, which was cheap and contained "health-giving proteins and minerals." Noting positive results in similar programs in the American south, he explained that it could be drunk as fluid skim milk or mixed into soups. It was his view that "at least 20,000 tons" of it should "be shipped to Japan for fiscal year 1948 for use in the school lunch program and for nursing and expectant mothers."[68]

The project somehow got off the ground in December 1946, utilizing 5,000 tons of canned meat from wartime military stockpiles, powdered milk and other foods donated by the American organization LARA (Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia), and U.S. army foodstuffs surplus to requirements.[69] The following December, Sams celebrated the program's first anniversary, noting how it had quickly expanded to cover 4 million school children and expressing gratitude for the LARA contribution of 300 tons of powdered skim milk. While delighted that nutritional surveys showed that "children are much better today in physique than a year ago," a "tribute to the school lunch program," he was impatient for more progress, urging that the program be enhanced (five meals of 600 calories each a week rather than two or three of

[66] Memo for record from Neff, 15 Oct. 1946, subject: school lunches for Japanese school children, NDL PHW 02186.

[67] Memo for record from Neff, 8 Nov. 1946, subject: school lunch program, ibid.

[68] Koenig to Sams, NDL PHW 02185.

[69] *History of the Nonmilitary Activities*, monograph 35, Price and Distribution Stabilization: Food Program (Tokyo: SCAP, 1951), 136.

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180 calories) and expanded to include 18 million children. In marked contrast to these grand ambitions, Bruce Johnston of the Economic and Scientific Section "took a somewhat pessimistic view," warning that "continued shortages would have a hampering effect on the school lunch program and other feeding programs."[70]

Johnston was right to be cautious. By July 1949, Sams was expressing frustration at the "constant struggle" necessary to secure supplies of powdered skim milk.[71] A review of the program by the Kinki Military Government Region admitted that "the majority of the children receive 105 to 180 calories only," while "the goal is 600 calories a day for each child."[72] Due to Europe receiving all available supplies of dry skim milk for much of 1949, a "bean paste soup" (presumably miso soup) of some 90 calories was substituted three times a week. The supply crisis only lifted in September 1949 when the program received, in addition to skim milk, regular allocations of edible oils, miso, shōyu, sugar, and salt, frequent allotments of canned foods released by the Eighth Army Quartermaster, and indigenous fish and vegetables.[73]

On 19 September 1951, an editorial in the *Mainichi Shimbun* sought to safeguard the future of the school lunch program. It stated that 8 million or 70 percent of Japanese school children were now benefiting from healthier lunches. Four million children in 3,707 schools in 248 cities throughout the country received full meals of at least 600 calories and 25 grams of protein, and about the same number received supplementary food (180 calories, 15 grams of protein). Commenting on the popularity of these arrangements, the editorial referred to a poll of 2,000 parents in 25 cities during the period May to June 1951 that showed that 78 percent were in favor of the school lunch program continuing at an average cost of 135 yen per month. As for its success, the lunch program certainly improved the health of large numbers of Japanese children by boosting their protein intake, but there is little evidence to suggest that it succeeded in "instilling into the coming generation the habit of eating and liking the kinds of food previously neglected which would correct the unbalanced character of the traditional Japanese diet."[74]

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[70] Memo for record from Neff, 12 Dec. 1947, subject: conference regarding first anniversary of school lunch program, NLD PHW 02185.

[71] Memo for record from Neff, 21 July 1949, subject: school lunch program reorganization, ibid., 02188.

[72] Review for the Commanding General, Eighth Army, 11 Jan. 1949, ibid., 02191.

[73] *History of the Nonmilitary Activities*, 35:138-39.

[74] Ibid., 19:125.

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For Sams, perhaps the political importance of the program outweighed its impact on "faulty nutritional patterns"; the powdered skim milk represented for him one of a number of "simple but effective tools in the cold war."[75]

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that famine, hunger, and nutrition were much contested in Occupied Japan in both theory and practice. On the one hand, there is no doubt that there was much suffering and deprivation among Japanese during this period, that urban Japanese in particular struggled to find enough to eat, and that some succumbed to lethal infection due to undernutrition or malnutrition. Yet it also seems that warnings, however much justified, about impending famine shaded into declarations of actual starvation, with the imminence and scale of the problem perhaps escalating the rhetoric to ensure rapid and sufficient flows of food aid. As recent media coverage of famine threats in other parts of the world indicates, the politics of the issue often demands that the problem be overplayed so as to ensure a timely response, indeed sometimes any useful response at all.

This is what occurred in Occupied Japan. The authorities for perfectly understandable reasons erred on the side of caution, passing on what frequently turned out to be Japanese underestimates of indigenous supplies, failing to confront the pervasive and disruptive black market in foodstuffs, and resorting to dire warnings of imminent social disintegration should Washington not act on their requests for food. During the crisis years of 1945-47, Japan only received a fraction of the initial requests, a discrepancy noted by Hogenson in his report of December 1946, but on the basis of definitions proposed at the beginning of this article, it seems clear that famine was in fact averted. The prospect of it in the summer of 1946 and 1947 was real. The associated clamor seems to have left an historical impression of large-scale starvation among urban Japanese.

Just as "famine" and "hunger" are terms defined by their political context, so too is "nutrition" as a concept less clear and more contested that is generally assumed. To begin with, the specter of starvation and the political fallout that would accompany it caused those involved to count calories. Although caloric intakes were quantified and carefully communicated to Washington so as to create a sense of imminent crisis, they were enumerated more calmly within

[75] Sams, *"Medic,"* 67.

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Japan to pressure the Japanese government to improve their rationing and food control systems. When the initial crisis passed by the end of the 1946 rice year, the debate's emphasis started to shift away from calories to nutrients, away from "acute malnutrition" to its "chronic" counterpart. The long-term aim – to quote Sams – was to change "faulty nutritional patterns," but in line with Saiki Tadasu's assumptions, these proved to be more entrenched than was originally appreciated. Perhaps in recognition of the intractability of the problem and the political importance of measurable progress on the nutritional front, the Occupation shifted its attention to children and championed the success of its school lunch program in reversing the nutritional decline of the war years.

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