

**Martin Bronfenbrenner:
An Economist in the American Occupation of Japan**

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Abstract

Martin Bronfenbrenner (1914-1997) was one of the last of a generation of generalist economists. His involvement in the U.S. Occupation of Japan changed his life and his career. This paper examines the mutually stabilizing relationship between his persona and his work in light of his experiences in Japan. Access to Bronfenbrenner's previously restricted and unpublished autobiography archived in the Economists Papers Project at Duke University allows the author to reconstruct, from primary source material, some of the challenges faced by the individual, prewar-trained economist in navigating the postwar transformation of the economics discipline.

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I. Introduction

In the 1940s, economics changed. From the earlier period in which the persona of the economist showed clearly in his (almost always “his”) work, economics became more anonymous, more scientific in character. That is, one no longer needed to know anything about the creator of an econometric model say, or a theorem. Martin Bronfenbrenner was trained at Chicago on the cusp of that transition. He became an eminent economist of the “old guard”, focused on a well-rounded understanding of the field as a whole. He played a significant role in the Occupation of Japan following World War II. Heretofore, no one has examined his contributions to economics in light of his persona; his personality colored his interests, interactions, and relationships. That these matters have been unexplored should not be surprising: today many economists regard consideration of an economist’s persona as “gossip” unconnected to that economist’s scientific work. But it was not always so, nor is it true today. Several recent studies in the history of science, and in the history of economics, have examined the interrelationship between biography and autobiography, life writing in short, and the character of scientific work (Weintraub, 2007; Düppe & Weintraub, 2014). Such histories are, in Soderqvist’s words, “an edifying genre” (Soderqvist, (2003) as quoted in Düppe and Weintraub, (2014), p. xv). With Bronfenbrenner’s passing and the recent release of his unpublished autobiography to the Duke University Economists’ Papers Project, the door has been opened for original research on the relation of who Bronfenbrenner was to what he did. We now have Bronfenbrenner’s own words, feelings, and thoughts to guide us through many of his achievements – and failures – and the prominent events in his life. It is important to note that in no way does this particular response to his life reflect or intend to make any causal claims. Instead we wish to pull back the veil covering a fascinating life and career by investigating the mutual stabilization of his personality and his work. We will see how that stabilization occurred during his time in the immediate postwar Japanese occupation. By first introducing Bronfenbrenner, Japan, and the Occupation, we can then in turn examine his path to Japan, his experiences there, and his life afterward. Finally we will be able to provide a new perspective on his life and career as it relates to Japan.

a. Who was Martin Bronfenbrenner?

Martin Bronfenbrenner might seem a particularly enigmatic character, and as we will see, his life does not entirely discredit that view. However, there does seem to be a certain flavor and structure that colored his persona and experiences, which touches on disjointedness with a hint of spontaneity. In reference to the field of economics, Bronfenbrenner was one of the last of a great generation of generalist economists. In a time when names such as Paul Samuelson, Milton Friedman, and others took the specialization in economics to new heights, he attended the renowned Chicago School of Economics amidst such dignified company but maintained a well-rounded understanding of and curiosity for the field. He is largely known and remembered for his contributions to international economics, income distribution, and Economic Japanology (Martin Bronfenbrenner, n.d.). The prevailing key to what he did accomplish, and what might best characterize the interaction between his life and work, would be an unrelenting willingness to ask questions. This would get him into trouble at times, and help him to spur the thought-provoking ideas and further questions that were useful to the field. It would also be a factor in the love he would develop for Japan. However, before examining his impact, let us consider the general outline of his life.

The son of an Austrian-Jewish mother and a Russian-Jewish father, Martin Bronfenbrenner did not have the childhood that would have been called “typical” at his time. He was born December 2, 1914 to Martha Ornstein Bronfenbrenner and Yakov Yurievitch Bronfenbrenner (Jacob) in Pittsburgh (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, chapter 1).¹ However it began with a very unfortunate turn. In April 1915, his mother died from injuries sustained in an automobile accident that left Jacob living and largely unhurt with Martin at home. Martin therefore began his childhood without his biological mother, something that he would later regret (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 2:1). Jacob would keep and raise Martin despite objections from the Ornstein family, and moved away from Pittsburgh to settle in the suburbs of Boston, Massachusetts. He was raised by a series of governesses and nurses, which produced a degree of suspicion toward adults, until he reached the age of six. In 1921, Jacob

¹ This source is an unpublished autobiography from the collection “Martin Bronfenbrenner papers, 1939-1995 and undated”. The collection is housed at The David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University. The page numbering system in the resource follows a new count at the start of each chapter. Hereafter, selections from this resource will be denoted with the following notation, where #:#-(#) signifies chapter and page number(s) within the chapter: (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. #:#-#).

married Miss Alice Klein, a woman fourteen years his younger, and they moved twenty-five miles southwest of Boston to Holliston, which would become Martin's idyllic country home of two years (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 2:8).

The years at Holliston and then his subsequent five years in New York City were formative. With his father having prevented him from playing with "street boys" in Boston, Martin did not quite develop the typical social skills learned during the six to nine year-old years. As such his eccentricities, talents, and lack-thereof contributed to his "sissy" reputation. Displaying very poor bodily coordination and thus being no good at sports – while simultaneously being younger than all his classmates yet substantially smarter – did not endear him to other children. This unfortunate social niche would persist well into his time in New York from age eight and a half to fourteen. Despite this somewhat poor experience in school and social circles, Martin liked his Holliston years best, retaining a certain affinity for the country property (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, chapter 3).

Bronfenbrenner's New York years are likely best characterized by adjustment from being an only child to becoming the older sibling of both a sister and brother. With Jack (December 1921) and Alice (July 1926) being born to Jacob and Alice, Martin learned to share the spotlight and attention of his parents, particularly with Alice who became the favorite. However, this experience did not produce bad relations with his parents as Martin was quite the independent thinker with newly developing hobbies (stamp-collecting and chess, for a short time). In addition, talking with Jacob about his bacteriological work both introduced Martin to the scientific method and scientific work and drew them somewhat closer (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 4:3-5). New York preceded the portion of Martin's childhood that would more greatly shape his youthful character and future. In 1928, Jacob gained the chairmanship of the Department of Bacteriology, Immunology, and Public Health at the Washington University Medical School in St. Louis, and the family moved westward (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 4:5-7).

The St. Louis high school years were the final period to mold Bronfenbrenner's person and interests before he was at last able to receive education in an environment and group of students closer to his intelligence level. Even while still being the youngest in his class and taking an overloaded schedule, he performed well. Particularly, he became a star in French and

English, and developed talents and interests in Latin, History, Debate, and Journalism. These pursuits would parallel his skills during his career, as Bronfenbrenner's separating characteristics were truly his eloquence and capability in both speech and the written word, even in non-native languages. Those skills will be a central point of perspective in this examination, and thus, we will delve into them further with a more detailed look into his post-secondary education. Of central importance to Bronfenbrenner's personal development during this period would be his "sexual retardate" nature (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 8:1). At an age when many were discovering themselves sexually and learning the ways of romantically selfish interaction, Bronfenbrenner alienated himself with lack of interest in these matters and even played the rule-following rebel (including tattling on other students in the school newspaper). Teenage rebellion for Bronfenbrenner seemed to be against other children, rather than his parents. Eccentricity and independence appeared in full form.

This brief history of Bronfenbrenner's childhood is intended mainly to communicate a few certain ideas. Bronfenbrenner was, in comparison to his cohort of students, overly intellectual. He was not simply smarter than all around him, but was indeed at the same time often more curious and direct. This was both an obstacle and a boon. Socially, it restricted and estranged him. Academically, it drove him to be successful. He was not distracted with sex and adolescence the same way that the other children and teenagers were. He developed his debating and writing talents, which likely contributed to the growth of his argumentative nature. Martin was "odd", as those that separate themselves intellectually are often deemed. But this oddity helped him gain admission to Washington University, and then Chicago.

Washington University was where Bronfenbrenner gained his exposure to economics. He entered with a rather abstract view of his potential career, what he called being an "applied historian" (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 6:2). While he lacked a concrete idea of exactly what this term meant, he did know that he was interested in journalism and contemporary history. Such endeavors eventually guided him into economic coursework in his third and fourth years. This, combined with the spotlight thrown on the field in 1933-1934 due to the Great Depression, instilled a working curiosity. That curiosity in turn, spurred interest in an M.A. degree in Economics in order to pursue financial or economic journalism post-education. He eventually attended the Chicago School of Economics, which was the first place that he actually

began to experience feelings of intellectual inferiority (due to the illustrious competition he had in that program). Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite the inferiority issue, Bronfenbrenner had performed very well at Washington and continued to perform at a high level at Chicago, eventually garnering a PhD. That performance would lead to quite respectable jobs as an economist of the US Treasury and a Statistician and Analyst at the Federal Reserve of Chicago. The injection of the United States into WWII with the attack on Pearl Harbor began to rapidly change things for him. He could not avoid the draft forever, and his fear of front-line duty led him to Navy Language officer training (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, chapters 6-7).

Bronfenbrenner went to Boulder, Colorado for Japanese language training. It was the only military position for which he readily qualified and had a lower chance of seeing military action. This was the beginning of his interest in Japan. It was also a time when he got himself into trouble (on a small scale at each occurrence) with his military superiors. From there he made his first trip to Japan with the Occupation in 1945, which is where he was truly bitten by “the Japan bug”, as he called it (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 13:1). His experience led him to return to Japan with the Occupation later as a tax economist. In some senses he would never leave. The culture interested him, as did his eventual second wife, Teruko, a native Japanese woman. Later for many years, Bronfenbrenner remained enamored with Japan and became an economic Japanologist, writing many papers on Japan and its economy in addition to Japan’s relations with the United States. He would make a number of trips there, totaling six by the end of his life. Part of his heart belonged to Japan.

Given this overview of his life’s travels, experiences, and his person, it is perhaps important to ask, what is Bronfenbrenner’s legacy? He did leave something behind as a person, if not quite much in fact. He left behind a failed first marriage to Jean Andrus, but a successful one to Teruko, who bore him Kenneth and June. He did not consider himself a terrific father; rather he felt he repeated mistakes his father made (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 2:5). Bronfenbrenner also left something behind to economics, other than his large number of works. He left an ability to write, to argue, and to ask questions to a degree that few economists have had. His penchant and talent for language have always been well-regarded and indeed remembered. As mentioned before, he also was one of the last of a dying breed, the generalist

economist. His curiosity fueled his lack of specialization. As a character, he was entertaining, funny, frustrating, witty, challenging, and contentious; his personality was quite polarizing. And yet, he was still a bit of an optimist when it came to economics. He preferred not to view and treat economics as the “dismal science” as some think it. This, in spite of suffering from depression, and great bouts of it. It would appear throughout his life, sometimes with great intensity for periods of months. Furthermore, his “motherless childhood” contributed to his emotional instability. The question then begged is, what is the sum of his persona? One answer is a man forged by unorthodox routes. We will explore those personal paths as they pertain to Japan, and how they follow a similar, mutually-stabilizing path with his work.

b. Japan

In order to understand Martin Bronfenbrenner’s contributions and experiences with the Occupation, it is crucial to understand the context for the social, political, and economic backdrop of the American Occupation of Japan. Japan’s rich history dates back further than that of its American occupiers; however, it was not until the late nineteenth century that Japan’s doors were opened to “modernity” through trade and cultural exchange with the West. Rapid industrialization, economic growth, and a commitment to Western market capitalism all spurred the Japanese Empire’s expansion, culminating in the nation’s establishment as a respected and powerful world player.

The end of the *Meiji* Period (1900-1947) laid the foundation for Japan’s World War II position of power. Its political structure guided the nation’s growth. In December 1926, Prince Hirohito succeeded his emperor father and began what is known as the *Shōwa* Period. Hirohito continued the prevailing process of limiting democracy in Japan as it grew more similar to a military state (Bix, 2000). As Herbert Bix explains:

Under the *Shōwa* emperor, therefore, the operating conditions for correct governance required extreme secrecy and constant simulation, dissimulation, indirection, and conniving on the part of high palace officials; unity, restraint, and profound humility on the part of ministers of state and heads of the emperor’s advisory organs, some of whom were deeply antagonistic and suspicious toward each other; and the embrace by the emperor of the dual morality that princes and politicians have practiced from time immemorial. (p. 181)

Similar to anti-communist movements that had begun in the United States, Hirohito and the rest of the Japanese government sought to eliminate radicalism, although this process’s blunt form

was effectively that of a military state. In Japan, the military enjoyed special privileges over “common folk” and was large in response to perceived need for the protection of its expanding annexations, controlled locales, and raw material supply chains. Such strategic decisions were based on counsel given to Hirohito (Bix, 2000). What emerged was a military state with growing industrial and productive capabilities.

However, Japan (like the rest of the world) also experienced setbacks and retarded growth during the Great Depression. At the onset of global economic downturn, Japan had been on the cusp of finding solutions to the persisting economic and societal issues from WWI. In the words of G.C. Allen:

...just when the problems of adjustment seemed to be approaching solution, Japan was overwhelmed by the world depression of 1930-31, and her efforts to free herself from its effects brought about profound modifications in economic policy and in the trend of industrial development. (p. 90)

Despite the depression, Japan continued to move further toward large industrialization, greatly increasing its volume of manufactured exports (a shift from previous efforts, which centered mostly on textiles). The Japanese economic structure changed as new industries became more important; most notably, capital goods became increasingly significant in the Japanese economic scheme (Allen, 1946). These changes were pushed through the strength of the *zaibatsu*, the mighty business conglomerates that characterized the economic activity of Japan (Zaibatsu (Japanese Business Organization)). But in order to accomplish these expansionary and industrialization goals, Japan needed to find a way to mitigate or solve the problems caused by a shortage of raw materials.

Within this context, one can see how Japanese society became oriented toward militarism and self-sacrifice. The goals of the empire – mainly expansion and control of valuable natural resources not found on Japan’s four primary islands – required a populace willing to sacrifice individual comforts for the greater good of the nation. Therefore augmenting the country’s defense capabilities and national wealth became Japan’s greatest priorities. Having already claimed Taiwan in 1895 and annexed Korea in 1910, Japan invaded and quickly conquered Manchuria in 1931 (Bix, 2000). Control of (and thus domain over) these geographic locations gave the Japanese Empire much-needed access to raw materials, and provided a buffer of protection from attacks on the main islands. Despite the rapid growth, the Japanese civilian

population (workers, families, and Japanese citizens who did not stand to benefit quite as much from the militaristic state) responded to the establishment of the military state with great passivity. Naturally, there were those that actively supported the military state with a nationalistic sense of pride; however, as much as supporters enabled such an environment, so did the passive citizens (Molasky, 1999).

At a larger level, Japan's economy was largely dominated and controlled by its business conglomerates, the *zaibatsu*. These immense capitalist enterprises (usually controlled or started by one family) maintained ownership of companies in a wide variety of industries. The pooling of resources made such firms very effective and competitive in both domestic and world markets, and allowed for rapid industrial and post-WWI economic growth (Zaibatsu (Japanese Business Organization)). In addition, their existence and hierarchical nature made calculated control of the economy possible for the military state. Ties between politicians and *zaibatsu* families were numerous; in some cases, *zaibatsu* families were represented by specific political parties (Schaller, 1985). *Zaibatsu* controlled large portions of the economy, suppressing wages while simultaneously blocking union organization and growing the drive for exports to further imperialistic goals.²

c. The Occupation (basics)

The Occupation of Japan was the United States' first independent, large-scale reconstruction of a modern-age country. An appropriate method for considering this process is to examine both the issues present at the start of the Occupation (and the cause of it) and the resulting solutions, in a general sense. For the sake of simplicity, the two areas of focus for the United States were the lack of a democratic political system and the existing state of Japanese wartime industrialization based on the *zaibatsu*. It has become common throughout American history, for the United States to democratize and "Americanize" occupied countries in the face of the prevailing systems. Often, as was the case with Japan, this process assumed that the "American way" was a better way of doing business. An economic system that had functioned so efficiently and effectively to take Japan, in roughly eighty years, from a feudal shogunate to a

² This, according to economist Corwin D. Edwards, was part of his assessment on a State and Justice Department-assigned mission on the Japanese combines.

modern world power, was dismantled in favor of laying the foundation for a hyper-competitive private sector (Cohen, 1987).

With the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the war between the United States and Japan effectively ended. Shortly thereafter, plans were rapidly established for the American Occupation of Japan, and two priorities quickly emerged: demilitarization and democratization. The planning and execution of the goals for United States occupation in postwar Japan have been extensively documented; the administrative duties of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) covered the two priorities, as Michael Molasky (1999) explains:

SCAP's two immediate goals for Japan were demilitarization and democratization. The former entailed disarming and demobilizing the nation's armed forces, punishing war criminals, and impounding or destroying equipment and materiel [sic] used for the purposes of war. Ambitious reforms aimed at instilling democracy in Japan were carried out during the first two years of the Occupation, when the influence of a small group of New Dealers within SCAP was at its peak, although no major policy changes were enacted without MacArthur's approval. (p. 5)

This process largely consisted of the dissolution of the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), removing and trying leaders such as Hideki Tōjō, the Prime Minister of Japan during the war (ultimately executed in 1948), and eliminating the wartime and pre-wartime institutions that fueled the Japanese military state. The removal of industry power from the *zaibatsu* conglomerates was a large component of American de-institutionalism, which will be further discussed later. The Empire of Japan had ended, and planning for a new western-style democracy commenced. To this point, Japan had already experienced two major turning points in its history: the assimilation of Chinese culture, and that of European-style government, military, and industrialization (Cohen, 1987). WWII and the subsequent American Occupation became the third. This period of the United States' direct involvement in postwar Japan permanently changed the landscape of Japanese identity and economic function.

Despite existing European governmental influences (having already been installed decades earlier), democratization of Japan proved to be a difficult process. Attempting to change a national identity was not a particularly easy task for SCAP and the rest of the Occupation staff. For years, the Japanese economy (and by extension its political system) was dominated by a

“faux” democracy. This concept was not unknown to the Japanese, but the militaristic, *zaibatsu*-driven state was centered on those very entities. Faux democracy was a monopoly-like system, with hands both in the nation’s money and politicians. The *zaibatsu* maintained great control over politics and the economy, yet in some sense also took care of their people. The Japanese workers and smaller companies depended on the conglomerates of which they were a part. Therefore, trying to implement an American-style democracy where competition and entrepreneurship drove the economy was seen as an effective reversal of the ideology on which the system functioned (Schaller, 1985). However, with cooperation from the Japanese government, Hirohito, and interested businessmen, transitions gradually took place until the Americans were satisfied with the Japanese economy. By 1947, MacArthur and SCAP declared the democratization goal effectively achieved (Molasky, 1999).

Labor reform was also a large priority of reconstruction, as American planners felt it pivotal to economic progress. As Theodore Cohen (1987) explains:

Japanese wage-earners and their families made up almost two-fifths of the population in 1945... Workers were concentrated in cities, where they could easily be organized. Not only were they literate, they were often well educated, and many of them displayed a flair for leadership. If their new labor organizations fell into the hands of the antidemocratic extremists, democratic government could not long survive in postwar Japan. The road to revolution ran through the labor unions. In those circumstances, the labor reform was vital not only to the success of the entire Occupation but to its stability. (p. 188)

Labor unions and reform were thus major building blocks for the long-term goals of the Occupation, yet their secure establishment proved to be anything but easy. There were unsteady moments for both the American soldiers and administrators and Japanese government officials. Cohen paints a striking picture of the situation, noting the tension present throughout:

Unfamiliar sights and sounds alarmed both the American military, to whom red flags meant violent revolution, and the conservative Japanese Government and its supporters. They were alarmed by the placards that, while thanking General MacArthur for democracy, demanded higher wages, special allowances, and more prompt distribution of rations in a strident, threatening tone. The message smacked of class warfare. To upper-class Japanese, the marchers certainly were not the compliant workers they had taken for granted for as long as they could remember. (p. 190-191)

The process of democratization met some significant impediments, especially in addressing existing cultural expectations of the working class Japanese. However, SCAP ultimately

succeeded in solving (or avoiding) problems to create an effective vehicle for the success of American goals.

To help make the Occupation successful, SCAP enacted many policy changes. While numerous alterations were produced, only a select few had a significant impact on the Japanese economy. Labor reform, as alluded to earlier, was an especially contentious issue for the Occupation. Several difficulties and fears were associated with the response to attempted implementation, and Americans in Japan experienced situations that were beyond the scope of anything they had previously encountered. Early decrees by SCAP in 1945-1946 made the process of building unions quickly rather straightforward (Schaller, 1985). As a result, fears of labor unions and movements were realized in the winter of 1946. Six million Japanese workers were prepared to strike as part of a collective movement of the Japanese Communist party. Economic conditions exerted great pressures on the Japanese working class, primarily in the costs of food and other living expenses. Food prices skyrocketed while wages stayed stagnant, forcing many Japanese citizens to sell possessions to live. Indeed, the cost of living rose by 50% between November 1946 and February 1947. However, SCAP and MacArthur were able to control the furor and passed a ban on the general strike, narrowly avoiding complications in this phase of the Occupation. Ultimately, the threat of discontinued labor unions was enough, forcing Communist leaders to back down and cancel the strike (Cohen, 1987).

The passage of the Labor Standards Act of 1947 (LSA) settled many of the labor problems. LSA provided standards for calculating wages, adjusted some sexist laws, and addressed working conditions as it decreed, "Working conditions shall be those which should meet the needs of workers who live lives worthy of human beings." The LSA continued with a strict description of specific parameters of minimum standards for working conditions, augmenting existing stipulations in labor contracts. With the avoidance of the general strike and the passage of the LSA, the working class of Japan was thus returned to some sense of normalcy.

In addition to labor reform, de- and re-industrialization of the Japanese economy were targets for SCAP. Washington administrators wanted all of Japan's prewar and wartime aggressive production processes removed, repurposed, or reorganized. Surprisingly, reaction from Japanese businesses and officials was not entirely negative. As Michael Schaller (1985) explains:

Fujiyama Aiichiro, a business leader who later served as foreign minister recalled that, “when it was learned that the occupying power would be the U.S....many industrialists uncorked their champagne bottles and toasted the coming of a new industrialists era.” (p. 4)

Despite this apparent excitement, SCAP still faced a very difficult task. A report on the state of Japanese industry stated that, “Japan retained a large ‘excess capacity’ of industry that depended on war-related orders and foreign raw materials” (Schaller, 1985, p. 38). While repurposing and reorganizing Japanese industries, American officials found that many facilities used for war-related purposes could be (and ultimately were) moved abroad without significantly harming Japan’s domestic output. Specific examples of this process include the seizure of manufacturing plants, restricting the airplane and shipbuilding industries, and reducing steel-production possibilities to less than a quarter of their previous tonnage output (Schaller, 1985, p. 38-39). Once the de-industrialization had occurred, the subsequent process of re-industrialization moved forward.

Kōdan, or Japanese public corporations, became the primary tool utilized by American and Japanese officials to achieve this goal. They became a useful postwar device for dissolving the Control Associations, as Cohen (1987) explains that they were:

...privately organized, owned, and staffed, had been the most visible part of an unholy alliance between the Japanese Army and big business to organize the economy in support of the war. (p. 327)

SCAP wanted to place the *kōdan* in the positions of the wartime Control Associations, to further remove the wartime industry structures and establish rigid government control of the re-industrialization process. By thwarting Japanese Socialist attempts to manipulate and grow the *kōdan*, SCAP was able to block the new *kōdan* and finally defeat Socialists in a few key election cycles. In this way, SCAP completed the mission of removing the Control Associations, ending their effective control of private industries and distribution channels that Washington wanted public.

From the de-industrialization process, the Occupation administration moved toward “de-feudalization”. The *zaibatsu* had created a mutually dependent relationship with the military to solidify power (from the growth of the *Meiji* Period), and Washington wanted it dissolved. The result was a campaign for the de-concentration of markets through the dissolution of the *zaibatsu* (Cohen, 1987). To a large extent, this process was unsuccessful; the *zaibatsu* corporations

informally continued to work with each other, with little effective change in power. As Bronfenbrenner said himself:

The Occupation's major campaign against the *Zaibatsu* was a dissolution program whose ultimate failure was as resounding as the postwar inflation itself. It failed both to punish the *Zaibatsu* companies allegedly involved in and profiting by Japanese militarism and to rebuild Japanese capitalism much closer to the pure competition or anti-trust act model the Occupation had in view. (Draft of *Economic Aspects of the U.S. Occupation of Japan*)

While Washington intended a rebirth of the Japanese economy founded on only small and medium-sized businesses, this did not happen. Nevertheless, the measures imposed by SCAP were significant enough that the face of the Japanese economy did change. In the eyes of SCAP and Washington, the economy had evolved sufficiently and was no longer primarily a war machine driving Japanese imperial expansion, however misled this belief may have been.

The final stage of the Occupation concerned the removal of traditional bureaucracy. This process included the replacement of both government and business leaders. This idea not only served as a punitive measure for personnel who had committed war crimes, but also to prevent a repeat in the marriage of Japan's military and economy as the country moved forward with American-deployed democracy. This process, colloquially known as "the purge", began in the political sphere with cabinet members, prominent political party figures, and others. The purge did not spare any governmental section or related institution. SCAP quickly moved through the political system, but encountered resistance when the purge began to address traditional market players in the Japanese economy. Many American administrators objected to the removal of Japanese business leaders, claiming that the economy could not rebuild itself without its leaders. In addition, the extent to which the Japanese imperial machine involved traditional business owners was (and still is) questionable. Thus, the purge reached a roadblock for quite some time as methods for best reforming the economy were discussed. However, MacArthur was eventually able to push his directive through, and about nine hundred removals and resignations (far fewer than political removal numbers) constituted the business purge (Cohen, 1987).

By understanding the Occupation and associated reform within the context of post-WWII Japan, one can begin to fully appreciate the individual players within each scope of the process. Martin Bronfenbrenner operated in the policy side of the Occupation, and understanding the cultural, societal, and economic issues leading up to and taking place during his time in Japan is

absolutely essential. Without such a proper context, his contributions and experiences would certainly be lost or misinterpreted.

II. *The Path to Japan*

Bronfenbrenner's involvement with the Occupation and Japan did not come from some lifelong dream. Rather, it evolved out of his graduate school experience. After a successful undergraduate career at Washington University in St. Louis, Bronfenbrenner moved on to the University of Chicago to pursue a graduate degree in Economics. That move was somewhat unplanned. He discusses it at the end of the chapter *Universität Strassenbahn* from his unpublished autobiography:

...only Chicago offered me a full-tuition scholarship in exchange for unspecified odd jobs in the Department of Economics itself. Disappointed – unreasonably so, I believe, since I had had no theory courses above the Principles level – I accepted the Chicago offer despite both my parents' and my teachers' pro-Wisconsin leanings. Also, despite occasional warnings about a sadistic and fire-breathing dragon called Jacob Viner at Chicago, supported by a mathematical monomaniac named Henry Schultz. It was, I think, the first major decision I had yet made on my own, the first lurch from passivity to some responsibility for my own future. During the Spring and Summer of 1934, Father mentioned my impending funeral with increasing frequency, but to Chicago I went in the end of September without benefit of mortuary preparation. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 6:13)

While obviously an option, Chicago was not necessarily Bronfenbrenner's first choice of graduate schools. This was true to the degree that he comfortably pokes fun at it. However, once there, he would make good use of his time. He developed a doctoral dissertation that was “an ambitious but unsuccessful effort to extend general equilibrium analysis to the theory of money” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 7:4). Despite the ultimate lack of high, meritorious success, Bronfenbrenner managed to still prove himself quite capable in the first year, and although he was not Paul Samuelson (to whom he often compared himself amongst others at Chicago during that time: Milton Friedman, Herbert Simon, and George Stigler), he received fellowship aid in pursuit of his Ph.D.:

Ill-prepared as I had come to Chicago, I had done well after that difficult first year. Overworked by the brilliance of the undergraduate Samuelson, I had been reassured by Douglas that “You needn't be a Samuelson to get along in Economics” – the best academic advice that I have ever received. Eventually I ranked, I suspect, in the second if not the first decile of most of my classes and examinations. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 7:11)

Eventually, through years of work and after getting his first taste of teaching (once his fellowship aid ran dry), Bronfenbrenner left Chicago for a Treasury position as an Assistant Economic Analyst in the Division of Research and Statistics in Washington, D.C. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 8:11).

While this initial, post-graduate job at the Treasury was a nice introduction to the real-life economic world, it appears in retrospect that Bronfenbrenner may have made a hasty decision. He writes in the introduction to his tenth chapter, *Reluctant Bureaucrat*, “This Washington move was a major mistake, which I should have avoided if the Central YMCA College had stood as high as it deserved in the academic pecking order of 1940” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:1). He had enjoyed his teaching position at the YMCA College; perhaps the pursuit of working as an economic journalist overwrote his pragmatic viewpoint and warnings from a fellow classmate (Orvis Schmidt) about his supervisor, Aloysius F. O’Donnell (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 8:11). One can see an emerging pattern at this stage in Bronfenbrenner’s trajectory toward Japan – it almost seems accidental. Nothing to that point, from his choice of Graduate School, to his dissertation, to his post-doctorate position had gone particularly smoothly. Such was the nature of Martin Bronfenbrenner at this point in his life.

While at the Treasury, Bronfenbrenner received his first experience of bureaucracy and hierarchical organization. He had accepted the position as an Assistant Economist under the guise that the title was a good indication of the level of closeness to “policy considerations”. He was wrong:

...I knew that no mere Assistant or Associate Economist or Statistician in the Treasury could anticipate daily or weekly sessions with the Secretary or even an Assistant Secretary, or to be consulted directly on matters of high financial policy. But I did under-estimate the number and the over-all incompetence of the bureaucratic layers that would separated [sic] me not only from the seats of the mighty but from any policy considerations whatever. For I was judging the Treasury Department’s Division of Research and Statistics by its title, not by its position in the Treasury scheme of things.

What was the position? Primarily a skeleton, secondarily a “turkey farm.” Because its top echelons had been held, in early New Deal days, by holdovers from the Hoover administration, its most important policy functions had been stripped away into two new Divisions of Monetary and Tax Research. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:1)

Indeed, the position at the Treasury became less than engaging for Bronfenbrenner. In his work, he suffered so many limitations that what he produced became the “epitome of dullness”:

This, I thought in my ignorance, was an exercise in narrative economics and economic history at the approximate level of an undergraduate term paper. I soon learned otherwise, the special rules being:

1. I was not to admit or even suggest that any mistake had ever been made. And I was to treat all unpleasant decisions as absolute necessities, with their unfortunate consequences as Acts of God.
2. I was not to mention any disagreement either within the Administration or the Democratic Party. I was to mention the Republican Party (and individual Republicans) as infrequently as possible.
3. I was not to use phrases or clauses which might be taken out of context and used to embarrass the Secretary by hostile Congressman at committee hearings. I could not, for example, say “This change in the income tax rate structure may appear regressive, but...,” lest Secretary Morgenthau be accused of admitting sins against tax progression.
4. I could not include technical matters beyond the Secretary’s notoriously-limited grasp, for fear the he might be requested to explain to hostile Congressmen what he [sic] had meant by them. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:3)

Even at an early professional age, Bronfenbrenner’s playful personality comes out with his humor here. These experiences, in addition to an enormously negative reaction from O’Donnell in reference to a possible position offer from the Office of Price Administration, caused Bronfenbrenner to consider moving back to Chicago to seek other opportunities. Eventually he and Jean settled on Graduate School for her at Chicago and a Statistician and Analyst role for him at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:4).

At this juncture it is necessary to pause and consider one of the important influences on general public life at this time in history. It needs to be understood whilst framing Bronfenbrenner’s career and life moves during the early 1940s. Hitler and Germany had long-since invaded Poland and then turned on the U.S.S.R. in June of 1941. For Bronfenbrenner, the pressure of the fighting in Europe amounted to a somewhat blissful ignorance of anxiety and excitement affecting the rest of the United States and Washington in particular. Most of the American male population was experiencing similar situations to that characterized by Saul Bellow’s *Dangling Man*. Many men around the country were stuck in between professional, civilian life and the army. This led to a twisted kind of freedom; men in such situations often felt no freedom at all. It would not be until they were finally regimented, ordered, and given

schedules for what to do that they felt freedom (Bellow, 1944). In discussing the events leading to achieving his Federal Reserve position:

All this within two week of Pearl Harbor, but the War had not entered my planning in any way. This is because both Jean and I had been suffering one of our rare fits of political optimism ever since Hitler's invasion of the U.S.S.R. in June. Hitler, we thought, would eventually get bogged down (or worse) in a Russia the Allies were supporting logistically, just as Japan had already got bogged down in China. Franklin Roosevelt, we thought, was winning his great gamble to wage undeclared war from a position of ostensible neutrality, while avoiding both the tremendous costs and the garrison-state risks of open warfare. I had of course registered for the draft in Alexandria when conscription had been enacted, but as British resistance had held I had decreasing thought of personal involvement, especially Hitler's turn against his Soviet ally. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:4)

But just a few weeks later, this perspective changed with the bombing at Pearl Harbor. Bronfenbrenner recalls, "At any rate, euphoria was shattered by the events of December 7... Before panic had subsided, I remember graffiti, 'Down with the Jews and the Japs' and I made a fumbling attempt to enlist" (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:4). Even this shocking turn of events did not produce the expected results. Bronfenbrenner describes his bumbling effort to enlist:

As for enlistment, I saw my statistical background as possibly suitable for a gunner-officer position on shipboard. Prior to discussing this possibility, however, the navy recruiters tested my eyesight. Some 50 potential volunteers were ordered to march forward, stopping when they could read the third line on an eye chart. When I stopped, I found myself several yards in front of everyone else, and the object of humor about my need for a seeing-eye dog and my future as a blind beggar. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:4)

With that humorous enlistment debacle, two points can be made. There are hints of disappointment about his lack of physical capability, and the undercurrent of inferiority in different forms returns in a different set. However, Bronfenbrenner moved on to focus his efforts on his new position at the Federal Reserve. He finally had the opportunity to engage in the economic journalism he so desired as a writer for Bank's *Monthly Review*, which he enjoyed. His secondary responsibility of revising index numbers on retail sales left him ample time to engage in professional writing, in which he produced only a single article on his Treasury experience, related to elasticity of demand for a commodity and the price and tax changes on it (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:5). The time from his initial year at Chicago to the

end of his Federal Reserve of Chicago stint was occupationally formative. Bronfenbrenner gained essential skills and experience with pragmatic, albeit dull, applications of economics. In ways, his teaching opportunities prepared him well for discussing and explaining policy agendas and ideas, while his more statistical endeavors prepared him well for the background behind the professional publications he would go on to write after his experience in Japan.

At the end of June 1941, Bronfenbrenner received his second call to Washington, this time to a newly developed wartime division, the Foreign Funds Control. However, this position evolved into a somewhat undefined and unsettled role when Secretary Morgenthau changed the policy regarding location of draft-age men. Bronfenbrenner had originally been designated to learn Spanish and travel to Argentina, but that itinerary became an impossibility. Secretary Morgenthau was responding to “media attacks on gilded youth avoiding military service in one or another special government program involving civilian jobs abroad” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:6). Bronfenbrenner studied Spanish while in Washington during this period, and “learned the ropes” in the Foreign Funds Control by studying “economic warfare”. He learned “how American motion-picture companies could have bought a good part of the Spanish wool clip from their blocked funds in Spain, keeping that wool out of German hands”, and “How easily skippers could be induced to deflect ships with Axis cargoes into the paths of U.S. submarines – if we would pay in gold rather than in dollars” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:6). This opportunity exposed him to some of the aspects of competing economic interests and strategies, which he later commented on when similar issues appeared in Japan.

As 1941 passed into 1942, Bronfenbrenner’s attention increasingly turned toward the draft:

As for my personal military future, I waited for the draft-board “greetings” that never came from Alexandria, and became increasingly nervous about the prospect of long-term check-signing or latrine-cleaning when these greeting would appear. So my thinking turned increasingly to enlistment in some special branch of my own choosing, which might exercise some of my putative abilities. In other words, toward what was already being called “draft-dodging in uniform” in this “popular” war. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:7)

Two options were all that seemed viable to Bronfenbrenner in order to avoid unsavory duties. He preferred Meteorology due to its use of statistical and analytical skills he had developed with

econometric work. The second choice was to learn Japanese language. However, after being rejected from Meteorology due to a lack of “sufficient” prerequisites, Japanese became appealing. Therefore, in January 1943, Bronfenbrenner left Washington for Boulder, Colorado (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 10:8).

Boulder began a new and very different chapter of Bronfenbrenner’s life. His relationship with his first wife, Jean, suffered, as the time there put a strain on their marriage. Jean pursued an M.A. in Mathematics with a minor subject in Physics, due to the lack of an economics degree at Colorado. Bronfenbrenner sums it up nicely when he says that “with her concentration in Math and Physics and mine in things Japanese, we were pulled somewhat apart – unfortunately, I believe, for a marriage based largely on mutual intellectual stimulation” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 11:4). The stress induced by the Language School was even greater. Bronfenbrenner soon found that Japanese was difficult. He had assumed that his success with European languages might translate well to learning any kind of language. He was wrong:

An early Jesuit missionary, during Japan’s so-called “Christian Century” (1540-1640) described the Japanese language as an invention of the Devil to insulate the otherwise-admirable Japanese people from the True Faith. The good father’s verdict was only a minor exaggeration...

Having always achieved good grades in school and college language courses, I came to Boulder with the cocky belief that I could have become a professional linguist had I so desired. It took less than a month of Boulder competition to rid me of that idea. These men – and, in later classes, women as well – were seriously interested both in the structure of languages and in the “walking-dictionary” or brute-memory aspect of learning them; I was not. They could and did study more and harder than I; they likewise made fewer careless mistakes. Some of them had in addition an intuitive feel for the *kanji* as an art form, and practiced elaborate multi-stroke ones for hours on end, while I just hoped to remember them until next Saturday. In short, I was a pretty mediocre student of the Japanese language. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 11:1-2)

Bronfenbrenner pokes fun at himself, Japanese, and the other students, but his underlying message is clear. The process of learning Japanese was quite difficult, and not only for him. He mentions that “many of my fellows were considerably worse. They began dropping out in considerable numbers – some with the neurotic accompaniments like depression, sleeplessness, and alcoholism” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 11:4). The Language School claimed many students, and almost Bronfenbrenner himself. As we know, he was prone toward

depression; however, he escaped its grasp in typical Bronfenbrenner fashion, with his musings in “scurrilous verse”:

Weep, O weep, for Yamamoto,
Fryin in his flying boat-o,
Though to you I am devoto,
Kindry follow Yamamoto! (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 11:4)

When our bodies wash ashore in the Penniless Postwar
(After every other corpse you care to mention),
They can join the hungry mob, fifty men for every job,
Too old to fight while still young to pension. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 11:5)

So Bronfenbrenner kept himself sane, and also earned a reputation. This is a theme that returned later in life, when he wrote the *Tomioka Stories*, a series of short stories and vignettes based on his experience in Japan. Despite his reliance on “scurrilous verse” Bronfenbrenner graduated (late) in May 1944 and was assigned duty with the Office of Naval Intelligence (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 11:6). He moved around the Naval Intelligence School and a few positions with O.N.I. before being ordered to Pearl Harbor for his first foray to Japan as a Navy officer. In late October he left Jean in San Francisco; they were childless and the marriage was beginning to deteriorate as he headed to Hawaii (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 11:7).

Bronfenbrenner’s posting in Hawaii consisted of translation work in the Joint Intelligence Command, Pacific Ocean Arena at Pearl Harbor on Oahu. He provides the best summary of his work:

Three translation projects in which I participated during my 10-month JICPOA stint were:

- (1) Sorting captured documents, mainly from the Marianas invasions, into those which were and were not worth further study;
- (2) Preparing a dictionary of “standard translations”: of various Japanese technical terms – military, nautical, engineering, medical, and meteorological – not combined usefully in our many specialized dictionaries.
- (3) Preparing, from captured Japanese business directories, lists of names and addresses of all establishments whose titles included the character for

“oil,” a major shortage in wartime Japan. (These were supposed to be potential targets for pin-point bombing, but the ones I located were chiefly devoted to some aspect of the soy business, called in Japanese *shoyu* or soybean oil.)

A more interesting assignment was keeping track of the damage caused, in the forests of the Pacific Northwest, by free-floating oiled-paper balloons the Japanese were launching, for a few months, in response to our bombing of the homeland. I became for awhile a leading specialist in the history and status of this type of balloon warfare.

Other Boulder boys with more JICPOA experience than I, better knowledge of Japanese, or better knowledge of military specialties, had more interesting assignments than these. Some participated in one or more front-line combat engagements instead of waiting around the “Pineapple Pentagon” for the big invasion of Japan, as I was doing. But almost from the outset had fallen into the bad graces of Z Section’s commanding officer and of JICPOA’s various censorship officers. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 12:2-3)

At this point in his career, Bronfenbrenner was not spending much time honing his economic craft. He merely followed the flow of his military assignment, lacking a generalized sense of where his path was leading. It was *Dangling Man* revisited. He suffered through more depression, which as we continue to see, coincided with less productivity. For him, much of this work must have seemed clerical and arbitrary, far below what his intelligence and capabilities warranted. In addition, as was typical across the course of his subordinate career, he found himself in bad graces. Commander John W. Steele, Bronfenbrenner’s superior, was not the most well-liked. Bronfenbrenner, also a character, unsurprisingly did not get along well with him. He wrote a humorous quatrain about the topic:

The boys go forth to the attack.

They may not all be coming back,

But volunteers we never lack

To get away from “Smiling Jack.” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 12:3)

However, that situation did not come without provocation:

The rules of naval censorship made good sense at and near the front lines, for which they were obviously intended. In a rear area like Hawaii they were, I still think, singularly stupid if taken literally, and I enjoyed playing games to see what I could get away with. I was quite straightforward and used no codes. If the censor thought I was going too far, I thought, he could just cut out the offending passage without either bothering me or mentioning me to Smiling Jack. But the censors thought otherwise. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 12:3)

This tendency for provocation and stirring the pot would continue to draw both the attention and ire of Bronfenbrenner's superiors and colleagues. On this occasion though, his behavior would only earn him two results, neither of which turned out entirely poorly. First, he was assigned frequent POW interrogation duty:

It seemed obvious to the Navy that, having been an economist in civilian life, I should know all about factories and factory layouts. So I was assigned POWs who, before joining the Armed Forces, had worked in particular factories the Air Force had photographed from the air. My job was to show each POW an aerial photograph of his former place of employment, asked him what was made in this building or that, where the workers lived, how transport and utility services were supplied, whether Allied prisoners or "slave labor" from China or Korea also worked there, and so on. This information I would write down, as assistance to the Air Force in selecting targets for daylight bombing in Japanese cities. (The war would actually end before any such bombing was attempted.)
(Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 12:5)

Bronfenbrenner found his POW experience interesting, and the interactions with the POWs may have generated the first itches of the "Japan Bug" which would later grab such great hold of him. In addition to the Air Force intelligence he gathered, he was able to gain some insight into the culture of the Japanese military with more ideological questions as well as welcome exposure to a less harsh POW camp reality than their reputations. This is not something that Bronfenbrenner indicated could be said of the POW camps in Japan, upon his first landing in Kyushu. "Smiling Jack's" second gift to Bronfenbrenner was his decision to leave him off the front-line transfer list:

My troubles were well known in the Zoo Section.... These troubles may, of course, have conceivably saved my life. I was on Commander Steele's list of those ineligible for "operations" further out in the Pacific. This reflected (I was told by his deputy) not only that I might violate censorship regulations even when they made good sense, but that I might be generally insubordinate to the point of telling superior officers to go to Hell. This sin I never committed, but Smiling Jack thought that I very well might, which would reflect on the training I had received under his tender loving care. But of course I might have been a casualty on an operation, since I was clumsy as ever and had never fired a gun (even in target practice). (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 12:4)

It turns out, his commander's "mercy" was quite fortunate. Bronfenbrenner avoided Okinawa and the other bloody Pacific theater battles that may have claimed his life. Instead, he sat plush and comfortable in Hawaii when the big news came. Bronfenbrenner says, "Hiroshima, of course, changed everything on August 6.... We celebrated the rest of the night, and I retain to

this day a selfish spot for the Bomb, which killed its thousands in Hiroshima and Nagasaki but may have saved my own life at Kagoshima” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 12:8). That happy selfishness was not to last too long, however. With the end of the war came the need to repurpose personnel for the Occupation.

Following the bombs, JICPOA became completely impotent for a period of about a month before anything came of the end of the war. “Smiling Jack kept Z Section from disbanding”, but Bronfenbrenner and the rest of his crewmates merely passed the time waiting for MacArthur’s Army man orders for the Navy. Ultimately, Bronfenbrenner relates the results:

Only a few of us would go to sea and accept surrenders of scattered Japanese island garrisons “withering on the vine” in the Western Pacific. Fewer still would remain in Hawaii as “cleaning ladies” putting JICPOA and FREPAC into peacetime mothballs.

This was indeed what happened. For us, and especially the economists among us, the plush assignment was to the Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS or “Uzz-Buzz”) which would tour Japan assessing bomb damage and getting first pick of souvenirs for sale. What I got, in honor of my continuing battles with the JICPOA censors, was censorship duty – the dregs. Together with my Boulder classmate Bill Hitchcock – how he had fallen into Smiling Jack’s bad graces I cannot recall – I was to be the language officer attached to an Army Civil Censorship detachment, attached in turn to the fifth Marine Amphibious Corps. We were to land at an obscure naval base called Sasebo, in Northern Kyushu, for further orders. In mid-September, a month after the Surrender, we were off. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 12:8)

Despite surprises, twists, turns, and bad behavior, Bronfenbrenner had finally finished his journey to the shores of Japan, but a new and life-long journey with Japan would only begin. After just a short time, he would be bitten by “The Japan Bug”.

III. *Japan and Back Again, Twice*

In his own words, Bronfenbrenner relates that “this was in retrospect my most important trip” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 13:1). This, coming from a man who made many trips over his years, across the United States and to and from Japan. Like the rest of his experiences in getting to Japan, this initial trip did not go quite as expected. Bronfenbrenner had in mind a picture of what his work in Japan might, and hopefully would, be:

Prior to the bite of the Japan bug, what did I expect from Occupation duty there? The cities I expected might be huge industrial slums, run down, burned out, and

bombed out by the war. I had hopes of assignment somewhere on my own in some country town with no boss nearer than GHQ in Tokyo, where I might be in personal charge of demilitarization and democratization processes and improve my Japanese for two or three reasonably pleasant years. A Japanese Holliston, if you please; if it also contained a rural campus like the ones at Boulder or Madison, so much the better. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 13:2)

This was quite an idealized expectation. Rather than something so “cushy”, Bronfenbrenner found that this picture was quite incorrect. His experience would not be on the whole lovely or particularly comfortable. His words provide a decent understanding of the dissonance:

What was left? Not having seen combat, I would have to grin and bear whatever it was for a year or two, hoping to get back before the Depression’s next act. I did *not* expect to be in the Navy for life, and hoped my prospective postwar employers (the Chicago Fed) might extricate me as soon as my “points” entitled me to a discharge. But for the indeterminate period until that time, I would be stuck in the morass of postwar Japan, avoiding cholera and typhus if I could, and staying as far as possible from both Tokyo and from gorilla warfare. (Tokyo would mean spit, polish, orders, organizations, higher officers, and Smiling Jacks on every corner.) Japan was, I am afraid, basically another set of “rocks,” bigger and more “different” than the Hawaiian ones but battered by the war and dominated by a *Zaibatsu* (financial oligarchy) both worse and more intrusive than Hawaii’s “Big Five.” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 13:2)

It is clear from the autobiography that his outlook at this point is his life on his Japan adventure was somewhat bleak. However, that feeling quickly turned. His cynicism turned to interest, as he went through various trials and tribulations dealing in particular with the cultural differences. These differences and interactions between the native Japanese and American Occupationaires would become the basis of his series of short stories, *Tomioka Stories*. For example, while on a failed attempt to go into Fukuoka to see the Kyushu University, Bronfenbrenner turned back and managed a train ride back to Sasebo, the military base at which he was housed:

We bounced along through village after village, past rice fields ready for harvest, with bright red *higan-bana* flowers in bloom and ranges of low blue mountains always visible on at least one side of the train. But I had problems with my seat-mates, a youngish farm wife loaded down with perhaps 20 kilos of rice and a little boy of three or four. The boy began playing with my pistol in its holster – we were required to carry loaded pistols in case of trouble. I had, I thought, set all the safety catches, but in case I clumsily made some mistake, I did not want to be shot in the foot, leg, or thigh with my own gun in a foreign land. So I told the boy’s mother that the gun was loaded and that her son should not be playing with it. She turned to me: “What are you doing carrying a loaded gun on a train? Don’t you know that war is over?” So much for the innate militarism of the Japanese

and the respect due the Occupation Forces. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 13:5)

This is just one of many awkward cultural interactions that Bronfenbrenner would experience. Not all of them were negative. In particular, he stresses that “as much as our resistance to criminal temptation, the Japanese admired our efficiency and hard work; our bulldozers did a better clean-up job in a week (from the July bombing) than the Japanese forces had done in nearly two months” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 13:6). Ultimately, not all interactions were of this variety either; there was “learning to be done on both sides.” However, this “great exchange” is likely what piqued Bronfenbrenner’s intense interest:

It could hardly have been more than two weeks that I spent in Sasebo. Two weeks was enough for the Japan bug to bite, and I am yet to be completely cured. This reaction my Japanese friends find incomprehensible, because the first couple of months after the Surrender were among the most miserable in their postwar history. How could all that smoking, stinking, battered misery attract any normal visitor when the later prosperity, in all its garish manifestations, seemed commonplace and boring?

As best I can rationalize the situation, every day was a little adventure, however insignificant in itself. Every day was a chance to feel, if not to be, useful in any Boy Scout sense of “one good deed a day.” The effect was even psychosomatic. Waking up wondering what that day’s adventure might be instead of how best to survive another day of meaningless JICPOA transition chores, I found myself content with perhaps two hours less sleep per night than I had been used to – also less food, which was just as well, since we subsisted on front-line rations. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 13:5-6)

In such a short time, Bronfenbrenner had caught the Japan bug. It would grow, more and more so as he felt he had more of a role to play in the Occupation. Thus, when he was called home along with the Marines on similar detail in 1945, there was certainly disappointment amidst the relief brought on by the thought of American soil:

Little did I guess that I too would soon be following the Marines home from Fukuoka. Despite the piddling nature of my past, present, and prospective daily assignments, I felt at least potentially useful to the Occupation, and reasonably happy in my insignificant role. In this respect, I differed from many “Boulder boys,” who sought to accelerate their homecoming journeys by forgetting their Japanese as fast as possible, and by refusing to use what they still remembered. Such sabotage, I thought, ascribed to our superiors more ability than I thought they possessed in distinguishing sheep from goats. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 13:6)

The humor does not quite hide the disappointment. It appears that Bronfenbrenner may not have been wrong to feel such as he did. While waiting for the boat home, and exploring around Tokyo, he made some observations. These included those about the general state of the Occupation, and himself:

Demobilization had become a decidedly disorderly process, with units and individuals competing to get back before that job was filled, that girl was married, or (as with the Marines in Fukuoka) before that unit was shipped to China.... As a naval officer, supposedly an all-purpose generalist, I was actually trained for little besides Economics, Statistics, and the Japanese language. For promotion and retention I would have had to compete with Annapolis-trained types who knew the right subjects and the right people, and so I declined without second thoughts. I was never presented with the alternative of staying on as a civilian economist or statistician, although such people were in great demand. Given this alternative, I would have jumped at it, so hard had I been bitten by the Japan bug. Such a choice, however, might also have been a terrible mistake, in view of the various “purges” and “reverse courses” forced on the Occupation later on, by the Cold War and the authoritarian elements in SCAP itself. It was not the last time I would be saved by ignorance, oversight, or pure blundering. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 13:16)

Such was the end of Bronfenbrenner’s formative trip. He had begun to recognize greater issues with the Occupation that he would confront more fully later on in his career. It is still important to note however, that through all of these experiences, he maintains a tone about his path that implies the locations of his footfalls were products of mere chance. In this continues the narrative theme of unintended fortunes and misfortunes. However, he would return to Japan in a short four years under different circumstances.

Once back in the United States, Bronfenbrenner returned to work at the Federal Reserve of Chicago as a finance economist. His one year stay back at the bank was largely uneventful, if not just a stepping stone for a move to Madison and a professorship with the University of Wisconsin. After over a year in which his marriage with Jean completely fell apart (to the point of her asking for divorce), Bronfenbrenner received a letter from Carl Shoup, the eminent Public Finance specialist at Columbia University (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 14:16). The letter asked if Bronfenbrenner wanted to join the Shoup Mission to Japan for work in the Public Finance Division of SCAP, reforming the entire Japanese tax system. Unsurprisingly, Bronfenbrenner was quite excited (both at the pay raise and the position) and happy to return to Japan and leave the issues with Jean behind. After receiving clearance, he was off to Tokyo in

1949 (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 14:18). However, Japan was not the same as he remembered. In four short years, the rebuilding effort had made its mark:

I remember surprise at how well-stocked and well-lit the stores and shop-windows appeared to be, and how far reconstruction had progressed in the nearly four years since my last visit. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 14:18)

It almost seemed as if, just as Bronfenbrenner was ready for a new Japan experience, Japan was ready for a new experience with him.

In his autobiography, Bronfenbrenner makes it quite clear that his preliminary perceptions of change were correct, but perhaps understated. More had changed than merely storefronts and appearances. A few of his words give the best characterization of his meaning:

These first impressions were not wrong, although I under-estimated their meaning. In fact they represented the first stirrings of the “Japanese Miracle” of the next quarter-century, gradually working its way up from more to less labor-intensive industry, and from consumption to capital goods... There had been a rapid rebound from the misery of the immediate postwar... Two major problems, however, remained. The first of these was the apparently chronic and unavoidable dependence of the current consumption level upon an import surplus... The second major problem was an impending tax revolt... Within the first week of my arrival at Tokyo I encountered a surprise less pleasant than the recovery of Japanese consumption. The 1945-56 ear [sic] of Japanese-American good feeling was over. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:1)

The new situation in Japan had become somewhat more uncomfortable. After having been under the rule of SCAP for almost five years, the Japanese understandably felt the United States was outstaying its welcome. However, part of Bronfenbrenner’s function as a member of the Shoup Mission was to be a part the solution to said second problem. SCAP had a “famous (or infamous) nine-point program for eventual Japanese self-sufficiency and price stability” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:2). Bronfenbrenner was involved in work related to four of those points, listed:

1. Restraint on public expenditures, with the exception (in practice) of “Termination of War Expenditures” (logistical support of the Occupation itself).
2. Restraint on the growth of the currency component of the money supply (although the bank-deposit component remained quite free to expand).
3. Drastic increase in tax collections from both direct and indirect taxes, and at both national and local levels.

4. A balanced, or some would say an over-balanced or surplus [sic], in the Central Government budget, including both the general account and the myriad of special accounts (some of them secret) in which deficits had previously been concealed. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:2)

Bronfenbrenner's previous experience with revenue estimating in the Treasury provided him with a time-consuming role performing a similar function. In addition he spent some time doing asset evaluation alongside members of the Japanese Finance Ministry, whom Bronfenbrenner felt were often more competent than those SCAP had brought over from the United States. This was largely due to struggle of the Treasury to keep hold of talented individuals to perform roles such as these. However, despite the time spent, Bronfenbrenner felt that "nothing was accomplished during my stay in Tokyo, but I made a few enemies in high places, and learned later that I was called a 'loose cannon' or 'unguided missile' (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:5). Bronfenbrenner never ceased to draw the ire of superiors, even as he moved from young economist to established professional, continuing the theme in his character. It is fair to question whether his depiction of his work for the Shoup Mission is truly fair to himself and the rest of the Mission, as it did produce a four-volume report on how to reform the Japanese tax system to accomplish SCAP's goals. Ultimately though, few recommendations were put into action, so it is difficult to judge the Mission's success.

Given his contribution, it is logical to consider the points of the report as they pertain to Bronfenbrenner. First, to understand its impact we should consider the power of the points in SCAP's plan listed above, namely the third. Again, Bronfenbrenner's own description is most clear:

The item numbered three, increased tax collections, had become the most painful to the man in the street or in the rice paddy. Each tax office had its quota of income tax collections. To meet it, the Japanese tax office forced taxpayers – sometimes with an armed U.S. soldier or two standing by for emphasis – to pay three, four, or even more times the amounts they had admitted owing. There was no pretense of justice or legality. Some taxpayers found themselves assessed more than their total incomes, after the process was completed. After a year or so of this, taxpayers were beginning to respond *en masse*, with mobs wrecking or burning tax offices and destroying tax records. Something clearly had to be done; the Shoup Mission were the miracle men who could do it. Or could they?

By "doing it," however, the taxpayers had in mind not the reconstruction of the Japanese tax system – the Mission's concept of its function – but rather the reduction of everyone's tax liabilities to some reasonable proportion of their

incomes. This the Mission would find difficult without involvement with the expenditure side of the budget (our Point 1) or with the principle of annual budgetary balance (Point 4). Both of these were excluded explicitly from the Mission's purview, and so there was little it could do to avoid disappointing Japanese public opinion. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:3)

The need for a new system was quite clear. Yet the obstacles, namely the different (and understandably so) priorities of the Mission and the Japanese taxpayers, appeared difficult to address. Ultimately, the recommendations that came out of the *Report* were viewed by the Japanese as a 'shifting around' of the tax burden without actually lessening it, given that the original goal of Point 3 above had been to "drastically increase" tax collections on every level. While this does not necessarily equate with a larger tax haul, it would be unsurprising if that was also partially the goal. If true, then an unchanging tax burden that is merely shifted more appropriately should have appeared favorable. Ultimately, "the Yoshida Cabinet and Liberal Party...considered the Shoup proposals 'too theoretical,' meaning too complex for practical administration" (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:3). Despite their relative failure in practical implications, it is interesting to gain Bronfenbrenner's perspective on the proposals' main points:

To me, the fundamental substantive points of the *Report* were these:

1. Retention of a direct rather than an indirect tax system, with a high degree of income tax progression. This represents a break with Japan's prewar tax tradition, but continues previous Occupation policies, and is based on contemporary (1940s) American practice.
2. Introduction of numerous refinements, both substantive and administrative, designed to reduce evasion and avoidance, and at the same time to increase progressivity. Many of these had been developed by Professor William Vickrey (a Mission member) and adapted from Vickrey's *Agenda for Progressive Taxation*.
3. A shift in tax receipts from the central to the local government bodies, to give the latter more revenue sources independent of Tokyo as the financial basis for local autonomy.
4. Revaluation of individual and corporate assets to take account of wartime and postwar inflation, and permit realistic provision for depreciation reserves and eventual replacement of capital. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:3)

At first glance, this appears to be a strong set of recommendations for continuing the postwar development of Japan's economy and furthering SCAP's goals with the Occupation.

Unfortunately it appears that most of the Shoup Mission's endeavors were largely ignored, or

forgotten, as in the case of the proposed VAT (value-added tax). It managed to pass in the Japanese Diet (similar to the United States' Congress) in 1950, but was postponed through 1952 when, upon the end of the Occupation, it was forgotten (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:5). Although Bronfenbrenner does not directly address it, it appears that he may have felt disappointed about this result. It fits with his regrets about not performing at a higher level in the field.

Regardless of the success of the Shoup Mission, Bronfenbrenner gained professional credibility from his involvement with and obvious connection to Carl Shoup. In addition, his path to contribution in the field of Economics was buttressed by his own actions during personal time. Bronfenbrenner explains how he met Tsuru Shigeto:

In addition to technical tax work, I did my best to keep up with general economics. As part of my preparation for return to Japan, I had established contact with Professor Tsuru Shigeto, who was at that time the Japanese economist best known in America. He had earned a Harvard doctorate; he spoke and wrote fluent English; I had read some of his publications, and had heard him praised by mutual friends as long ago as his student days in 1935. Now we began to correspond, and Professor Tsuru offered me the opportunity to join him in conducting a graduate seminar on Western macro-economics at Hitotsubashi University...I came to look forward to those Wednesday afternoons on the Hitotsubashi campus... (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:6)

During his time in Japan, Bronfenbrenner received a heavy dose of exposure to Marxism – including his interaction with the Marxist Shigeto – which was the majority economic ideology in pre-war and Occupation Japan (Bronfenbrenner, 1967). His association with known Marxists actually became somewhat of an issue later with SCAP purges of potential Communists due to burgeoning McCarthyism.³ Regardless, this is the only confirmation of any economic work that Bronfenbrenner claimed while in Japan. He mentions none of his papers and publications. This is strange considering he would go on to write so much about Japan. However, while in Japan he had one more responsibility. He was sent to Okinawa for ten days for a SCAP mission to replicate the disinflation occurring on the main island of Japan. This was a difficult proposition given that “the Ryukyus specialized in sub-tropical agriculture, had no industrial base in the short term, and had lost most of its best (most level) agricultural land to Occupation airfields and

³ Bronfenbrenner would receive minor penalties of “desensitization”. For a brief period of time he was not permitted to read sensitive material in SCAP.

other installations” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:8). Bronfenbrenner and the others on the Mission (mostly ‘rejects’ from other divisions of SCAP) had to worry about the threat of permanent exile, as often happened to civilians that ended up in Okinawa and Korea. However, Bronfenbrenner’s superior, Harold Moss, mandated that he return to Tokyo in ten days given his unstable standing with SCAP. The short period “saved [him] from participation in what must have been an economic monstrosity, the Mission’s final report” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:8). Bronfenbrenner ended up working on a different problem than intended, and may have accomplished something special in the process:

My main target was supposed to be the Ryukyuan tax system, but because no one else was willing to fix an exchange rate for the Ryukyuan yen, I spent most of my time on that problem. Using rudimentary price statistics for perhaps 10 key commodities, I decided that one Ryukyuan yen had the approximate purchasing power of three Japanese yen. Using an elementary purchasing-power parity theory of foreign exchange rates, I therefore suggested that the U.S. dollar should equal 120 Ryukyuan yen, since others had set the price of the dollar at 360 yen earlier in the year. This suggestion being adopted, the rate stuck until 1958, when the Ryukyuan yen was abolished and the islands adopted U.S. currency for the few remaining years of American rule. I am thus one of the few international (or other) economists to have set an exchange rate by himself, more or less successfully. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:9)

Bronfenbrenner’s rate-setting experience became an impressive addition to his résumé. He was clearly proud of his action, and well should have been. As an international economist specializing in Japan, setting an exchange rate would be one way to make a real and substantial impact. This would be a sign of things to come, as his reputation and eminence would continue to grow, establishing him as a respected Japan and international economist.

Only two more significant events would occur before Bronfenbrenner left Japan for the second time and the Occupation behind. First, he would develop his relationship with Teruko, his second wife. His relationship with Jean had completely deteriorated. After an argument borne out of Jean’s difficulty in obtaining a security clearance to work in the Department of Commerce in Washington, Jean had continued to associate, against Bronfenbrenner’s suggestions otherwise, with a friend that had known Marxist sympathies. This led to an unfortunate ‘I told you so’ from Martin, which produced an ultimatum from Jean:

Either I would undergo intensive psychiatric therapy as soon as I returned to the U.S., or she would have nothing to do with me. And under no circumstances

would she come to Japan before I had such treatment. That was final.
(Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:11)

Instead of sending Bronfenbrenner into a spiral of depression, as was his tendency with stressful events particularly related to Jean, he became decisive and took action instead. He had been seeing Teruko for months and made a conditional proposal in the summer of 1951; if they spent an engagement getting to know each other further and things went well, marriage might happen by the end of the year (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:12). Teruko said yes, and a new chapter of personal life began for Bronfenbrenner. After navigating the frustration of assuring her passage to and legal status in America following a long waiting period, the two were married in mid-November of 1951. This period in his life, until his eventual death in 1997, was largely different emotionally and psychologically for him. His marriage to Teruko marked the relative end of his struggles with depression, which allowed him to focus more on his work. This all despite the poor reaction from friends and family for both Bronfenbrenner and Teruko when they announced their engagement (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:14).

The second event was his avoidance of the “red purges” of SCAP, although he did not accomplish this without anxiety. Bronfenbrenner was not caught in the “Black Monday” of SCAP purges on April 17th, 1950, but the following day received troubling news that his background was being checked to look for Communist ties. A superior, Harold Moss, informed him that he “best resign and return” breaking his two-year contract with the Public Finance Division (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:13). There were issues regarding him being pro-Japanese (and rightly so to some degree), his associations with Professor Tsuru, and his irregular security clearance in Washington. As a result, Bronfenbrenner wrote both the University of Wisconsin (in anticipation of returning early) and Harold’s superior officer with his resignation. His resignation moved forward amid a severe depression, as he waited on the outcome of the SCAP purging and a response from Teruko about engagement. Fortune took a good turn, as both she replied yes and his resignation went through without incident:

What appears to have happened – I can only guess – was a belated realization by the dreaded G-sections that they had been spending too much time and effort shadowing marginal security risks in Japan, too little on shadowing the 38th parallel in Korea. I went back to the nothing of being a tax economist, and my resignation was accepted without fuss or prejudice some time in July. I do not know how great my debt may be to Kim Il Sung and the North Korean Army for

involuntarily extracting me from my delicate situation with a whole skin.
(Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:16)

With depression subsiding and positive outcomes from the two potential obstacles in his way, Bronfenbrenner was able to depart the Occupation for good. However, this was not without effect on him. Although his time with the Occupation had ended, Japan had only more fully invaded his persona and would continue to live on in his wife and work. In his own words, upon homecoming “a couple of my uniformed fellow-passengers – home, perhaps from the Korean meat-grinder – kissed the ground. I felt rather like cursing it; the Japan bug, after all, had bitten again” (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 15:16).

IV. After Japan

Bronfenbrenner reflects on the interactions of Occupationnaires and the Japanese people quite directly with his *Tomioka Stories*. From these the reader discovers a somewhat different personal perspective from what is found within the autobiography. The autobiography has a greater sense of being a continuous story, told all at the same time, without interruption in thought patterns. The *Tomioka Stories* however, were written not only at different times (different decades even, and not published until 1975) but also about different issues. All five of the stories and the four vignettes present in the book are based on real experiences of Bronfenbrenner’s or relations of his, with varying degrees of added fiction or historical accuracy. He contends in the preface that the vignettes are “more frankly autobiographical, and likewise more nearly true as they stand, than the longer stories” in addition to being “laid where they happened” (Bronfenbrenner, *Tomioka stories from the Japanese occupation*, 1975, p. 8). The major thread present throughout the stories are that the Japanese were more often than not the “good guys” while the American Occupationnaires were the “bad guys”. This is similar to comments made by Bronfenbrenner in the autobiography, and likely engendered much of his sympathy and interest in Japan. In order to understand the effect of the Japan trips during the Occupation for him, it is helpful to hear bits of his stories.

In many senses, Bronfenbrenner’s career and character trajectory were mutually stabilizing, as we have mentioned previously. His challenging and questioning nature come together both in person and in career during and after his time with the Occupation. Bronfenbrenner’s experiences in Japan changed his perspective not only on life and race, but

also on the ideological standings of his home country and its culture. This is no more evident than in the first of the *Tomioka Stories*, “Fusako and the Army” (1975). The story focuses on four main characters: Fusako (a somewhat plain, yet attractive, Japanese woman), Bob Smith (a gentlemanly, kind, and respectful American soldier), “Sarge” (a rude and inappropriate American soldier), and Joe Kaneshiro (an American of Okinawan descent). The plot line is mainly about an interracial love-relationship that develops between Fusako and Bob Smith, despite the obvious hurdles to navigating such an ambitious relationship. While tagging along with Sarge as Joe plays tour guide in the fictional Tomioka, Japan, Bob’s attention is diverted from begrudgingly searching for geisha houses and cheap sex to the person of Fusako Fukuda. After meeting through Joe’s translational skills, the two spend nearly all of Bob’s free time together over the course of his stay in Tomioka, to the point at which they want to marry. A sad scene develops when Bob approaches his superior officer to ask permission to marry Fusako, and the Colonel makes his response:

“Hoss-shit, man. She a *Jap*?”

So the answer was going to be no. This would have to be thought out. But the Colonel understood Bob’s awkward silence and continued after organizing his views.

“I told you once, Hopkins, I told you a million times. I mean this quite sincerely. We simply will not have no souveneering, or fraternizing, or pilfing, or loitering in this unit.” Long pause for further organization. “You’re all picked men, and I’m relying on you. This is enemy country. This war isn’t over yet, not by a long shot. When *I* go out, the top’s down on my jeep, and so’s the windshield. I take my car-been. Might have to do some shootin’. Don’t trust none of the varmints – not one.”

What was this about? Oh, yes, marriage. Hopkins wanted to marry a Jap, did he? The Colonel rose in his chair, thorax swaying under the decorations.

“What was this about, anyhow? What we doing over here, anyhow? Now Tōjō he goes attacks Pearl Harbor, and Wake Island, and the prison camps, and the atrocities. You know about them, don’t you? Well, we get good and mad and we kick the shit out of them. Then you want to come over here loving up Tōjō’s sister. Who the Hell they going to think won the war?” This was unanswerable. “How we get their respect, that-a-way? Souveneering and fraternizing and pilfing and loitering—I’m surprised at you, picked man like you, letting me down. Taking up with a monkey bitch—what would you Ma or Pa say to that? And ain’t you got no gal back home? Hell, no. Absolutely the last word. Absolutely high policy.” (p. 39-40)

After explaining that Fusako is pregnant with his baby, and receiving an indicting, condescending response from the Colonel, Smith defends his position, with the Colonel still referring to him incorrectly as Hopkins:

“Pardon me sir, but I know this girl. She’s as nice and clean as any Stateside girl I ever met. Nicer.” And the damage was done.

The Colonel stared as though Bob had pronounced himself Napoleon, with a dash of Hirohito.

“You know what that there is, Hopkins?” he roared. “What you just said, that’s treason and sedition and—and disrespect for Amurrican womanhood! I can have you court-martialled for that, and damned if I won’t!” Bob froze in his chair, but the Colonel, too, cooled off. “You got in too much trouble here in—here in Tamoki, but I’m giving you one more chance, on account of you’re a picked man. Out you go tonight to Chicken Shima, and don’t let me hear nothing about not more loitering out there. Now get along back to work, I’m busy.” (p. 40)

The story finishes with Bob being forced out of Tomioka and transferred before he can even communicate with Fusako, who learns of her fiancé’s unfortunate departure via Joe and Sarge. This is a tragic ending to a difficult situation, one of many that Bronfenbrenner and others would experience during the Occupation.

“Fusako and the Army” communicates a number of important lessons learned by Bronfenbrenner during his time as a Language officer. First, it is evident from his writing that the Japanese were treated as a lower form of human being on a general level, and the taking of Japanese wives was seemingly prohibited in most cases. This would strike a chord with Bronfenbrenner, as he would eventually win the right to marry Teruko, and perhaps this story even characterizes their own relationship to a degree. Bronfenbrenner had met Teruko in Japan before he had divorced his first wife Jane, and he experienced quite a few obstacles to ending the first marriage and beginning the second. One might speculate that the story was written not only to shed light on a reasonable Occupation situation but perhaps also to question the American perspective in the situation. This was blatant racism. Second, Bronfenbrenner would gain a great appreciation for aspects of Japanese culture, notably its respectfulness and similarities to American cultural goals. Soldiers in the Japanese Army took orders and fought for their country as assigned to do, just as did the American soldiers. They were not all monsters, he would come to realize, and not so different at a basic level from the Americans he knew. Third, Bronfenbrenner recognized a disconnect between American caution while viewing the native

Japanese as active enemies (despite a concluded war) and Japanese respect of the terms of its nation's surrender (abiding by the rules of SCAP and largely cooperating with the initial stages of the Occupation). Lastly, as the phrase goes, "history is written by the victors". Bronfenbrenner realized that there was more of a story to tell than purely that of American victory and westernization of Japan and its system. A culture that so interested him was worth considering without the bland perspective of prejudicial American views. He would do that with his *Stories*, and with subsequent papers. More comes from this short story than merely lessons learned. There are views and feelings of Bronfenbrenner's own that develop as well.

While the cited passages do not quite clearly demonstrate them, Bronfenbrenner composes "Fusako and the Army" with different tones toward the characters, situations, and interactions. He writes with a seemingly reverent tone when describing Japanese way of life and preparing for the day in the opening chapter, yet with more of a disdainful tone when Americans are mentioned. However, he does retain some bias toward the United States as the Occupation soldiers are mentioned as being better or nicer than expected by the Japanese people. Regardless, it seems clear that the Japanese are to be favored. It is not unreasonable to suggest that this creation of the story might reflect changes in Bronfenbrenner's approach toward viewing American policies and positions both culturally and economically. Never afraid to express an unpopular opinion, Bronfenbrenner found a venue to express them with the *Tomioka Stories*. While the stories might not be the beginning, they are part of a larger movement in Bronfenbrenner's professional life that would lead to papers questioning the authority and correctness of American positions in regard to Japan, such as "The American Occupation of Japan: A Retrospective View", published in 1968. The reservations Bronfenbrenner had on a professional level related to Occupation decision-making in rebuilding Japan were reinforced by his personal experiences there. The character invades the work, and vice-versa.

Other interesting themes emerge in the story. Sarge is after nothing more than "working the system" to his own ends. Perhaps this was a characterization of the average Occupation soldier, and it is a point worth considering. Bronfenbrenner is not the only person to take notice of the inappropriate and sometimes criminal behavior of Occupationnaires. Stories of men raping or taking advantage of Japanese women, through force or false pretenses of marriage were not unheard of. To many Japanese women, American marriage represented the prospect of leaving

the ruin of Japan for a nicer, richer, and more comfortable American life. It would be a reasonable position to wonder whether a conquering force and culture might have something right that the losing one does not. These are questions that Bronfenbrenner would ask himself, when considering the “war” for his cultural affections. Might the Japanese have gotten life and culture right in ways that Americans got it wrong? More than likely, as could be said of any number of cultural comparisons. But these were the issues Bronfenbrenner was navigating within himself. In the story, he does mention the racism shown by mainland Japanese toward the Okinawans, in Fusako’s disdain for Joe. It could be nothing more than an interesting observation from his time spent there, but, regardless, it speaks to his curiosity. Finally, one should consider the characterization of the Colonel in the story. Bob Smith has his disagreement over the marriage issue, and expresses some insubordination. Simultaneously, the Colonel responds quite harshly. Bronfenbrenner, as already mentioned, did not have the best track record with military authority. This story could be partial justification and recognition for his own stance and experiences. Still, it is not so often that one sees a figure’s experiences so clearly reflected in his or her own work. While some may decline to consider Bronfenbrenner’s *Tomioka Stories* as ‘work’, its production being a result of both real-life experience and career-related talents (writing skills) firmly entrenches the collection as a reasonable analog.

Publications

Moving beyond life-influenced fiction, the patterns of both persona and career trajectories spiral together in Bronfenbrenner’s post-SCAP position work. Making these comparisons might best be served by stepping back from the abstract nature of Bronfenbrenner’s character and the concrete nature of his work. When exploring his professional biography, it is possible to split his academic career in sections. The first segment of time, namely from 1937-1943, Bronfenbrenner spent following the economist track, finishing at Chicago and teaching before working for the Treasury and Federal Reserve of Chicago. The following three years from 1943-1946 were spent as a Japanese Language student and Naval Officer in Japan. The period following was a return to the economist track, working again for the Federal Reserve and as a professor at the University of Wisconsin before returning to Japan from 1949-1950 to work with the academia for thirty years as a professor at Wisconsin, Michigan State, Minnesota, Carnegie-

Melon, and Duke Universities (Bronfenbrenner, Professional biography). With that knowledge in hand, we can examine his papers.

Before going to Japan, Bronfenbrenner's economic publications were mostly very academic and general in topic. Titles like "Theory of Collective Bargaining", "The Keynesian Equations and the Balance of Payments", "Some Fundamentals of Liquidity Theory", and "Price Control under Imperfect Competition" can be found in his Curriculum Vitae. Given the few years needed to move a paper from writing to publication, papers like "Four Positions on Japanese Finance" and "Monopoly and Inflation Problems in Contemporary Japan" started appearing in 1950, which would place their writing around the time of return from Japan (Bronfenbrenner, Professional biography). A sudden change in topic attention is observed; the presence of Japan and its influence in Bronfenbrenner's writing pursuits becomes a permanent mainstay. In fact, for a period of time (from 1955 through 1973), the plurality of papers he published regarded or were specifically about Japan in some sense (Bronfenbrenner, Professional biography). His attention largely turns from discussing different theories within the field to real-world issues related to Japan and the United States. This mirrors the changes going on in his personal life. The years between 1937 and 1943 were Bronfenbrenner's period of being "a dangling man". Still largely without a cemented direction in his economics career, he wrote articles and published on topics in a general way. He does not repeatedly turn to the same theories and considerations. He was not doing trailblazing work in any particular area of the field. He comes across as somewhat lost, due to depression and anxiety, both professionally and personally. After his experience in Japan, however, things changed for him in both spheres of his life. He had been bitten by the Japan bug, ended his American marriage, and started a new one with Teruko. The persona begins to become focused. He had children in his new marriage, and made several visits back to Japan for various reasons. In a parallel sense, the career seems to gain focus as well, on the surface level. The publications show a pattern of questioning aspects of the Occupation, which approaches should be considered in rebuilding or helping to grow underdeveloped economies, and what the long-term outlook is for Japan. In character and career, it seems that Bronfenbrenner was simultaneously cementing himself. This idea becomes clearer when exploring his publications.

In 1969, Bronfenbrenner published “Economic Aspects of the U.S. Occupation of Japan”.⁴ This came about seventeen years after the Occupation had officially ended. Yet still, Bronfenbrenner was considering the questions posed by the results. He addresses both failures and successes of the Occupation and, notably, also discusses its handicaps. This can be viewed as the thoroughness of a generalist. While the basic structural outline is what one would expect from an academic paper, the tone with which he writes is very much his own. The initial disclaimer heading, “Biases of the Writer”, is a perfect place to begin:

As an ex-Occupationnaire, I find it difficult to control my prejudices when considering any aspect of the Occupation. Fortunately, my two biases pull me in opposite directions. On the one hand, the Occupation gave me (at the expense of poverty-stricken Japanese) a higher standard of living than I ever enjoyed before, and possibly since. But then, after a year of this unearned increment, the Occupation nearly expelled me from Japan, branded as a subversive or pro-Communist. And so I hope I can be more or less “Objective” about it. (p. 17-18)

Bronfenbrenner is very candid in this disclaimer, and throughout the entire paper. He writes in his honest voice, and does not mince words when it comes to his opinions or thoughts. This sounds very much like the character one comes to expect from the examination of his life. The time spent through his education and childhood built up the persona that would have the courage and bluntness to write more than just economics, but personality. It certainly makes for more interesting reading, and more engaging thought. The summary of the paper is quite similar:

It is difficult if not impossible to summarize this jumble, crossing so many branches of social science, in any intelligent way. Certainly the performance of the Occupation in both reconstruction and development was less outstanding than I remember anticipating, as an inexperienced serviceman in Northern Kyushu during the Occupation’s initial era of good feeling. There seemed at that time no difficulty in convincing the Japanese of almost anything we wished—even those Japanese affected adversely. This euphoria, of course, did not last. It could hardly have lasted even with an occupation force of philosopher-kings and plaster saints, which ours was not. (p. 25)

In some sense, Bronfenbrenner’s attitude toward his own professional analysis is refreshing. In another, it could seem an affront to academia. Perhaps the answer is somewhere between the two, but it seems likely Bronfenbrenner did not or would not care either way. At this point, he considered himself to have been ‘established’ in the field. In fact he wrote, “By 1957 I was

⁴ This source was also published under the title “The American Occupation of Japan: Economic Retrospect in a research publication edited by Grant K. Goodman in 1968.

already established and marginally distinguished in my chosen profession”, and he was not one to shy away from his proclaiming his opinions in favor of subtlety (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 18:1). His personality was so firmly entrenched at this point that it invaded his work, and in many ways made it shine. The writing and argumentation skills make the actual content of this paper, which we will next examine, that much more convincing to the reader.

The meat of this paper is the description of six handicaps of the Occupation, three successes, and three failures as seen by Bronfenbrenner. He begins with the six handicaps, which are: its impermanence, personnel inadequacies, change of American policies, business circle harassment, Japanese attempts to “wait the Occupation out”, and “weakness of coordination...between its sections and bureaus”. The successes were: the “relief and rehabilitation program, the agricultural land reform, and control of American ‘carpetbaggers’.” The three failures were: the Japanese inflation problems between 1945 and 1949, the failure of the *zaibatsu* dissolution program, and the failure of its trade union policy (Bronfenbrenner, *Economic aspects of the U.S. occupation of Japan*, 1969). It was important for him to establish for the reader the obstacles to long-term success before the Occupation even began. Regardless, Bronfenbrenner’s assertion that personnel inadequacies were a handicap of the Occupation was insightful. He predated academic analysis of reasons for military Occupations to be hindered or fail by around 35 years. Not until 2004, when David Edelstein completed a thorough analysis of military occupations, were the reasons for success and failure in such occupations closely examined; interestingly, one of Edelstein’s main arguments agrees with Bronfenbrenner. Edelstein claims that “several occupations have been undone by the failure to clearly establish the goals of the occupation and appropriately train occupiers” (2004, p.81). While the goals were effectively established for the Occupation of Japan, “personnel inadequacies” were a present hindrance. What makes Bronfenbrenner’s argument more powerful is that he witnessed these inadequacies firsthand. As a Japanese Language Officer, he saw the significant problems this issue caused:

The great majority undertook their jobs with little or no background in Japanese language, history, culture or institutions. They were, furthermore, under the control of military men less prepared than themselves for the responsibilities of civil government... Some of the top-ranking civilians too, being ex-soldiers as well as economists or sociologists, saw their functions as anticipating and

rationalizing every twist and turn in the thinking of their military superiors, and acted as advocates or yes-men rather than intellectuals or consciences. (p. 18)

These and other situations find more reference in the *Tomioka Stories*, public knowledge of the Occupation, and other literature. Nonetheless, it seems that despite this hindrance to the Occupation, both Bronfenbrenner and Edelstein decide on the same characterization of the result: more success than not (2004). Bronfenbrenner's own characterization speaks for itself and was a stance that became fairly consistent for him over time; he straddled the fence while leaning to a side:

On the other hand, looking backward, the record of the Occupation was better than I now think I had any right to expect in 1945-46, considering its brevity, its overstay of its welcome, and the resulting temptation to ride roughshod over Japanese public opinion. I know of no military occupation which did much better with similar obstacles in an equally large and alien environment. On the other hand, one wonders what massive and purposive subversion, organized and financed from China or Russia could have done to SCAP had it gotten under way sufficiently early in the Occupation. (p. 25)

This kind of perspective is somewhat divergent from what is found in professional economics, as one must often choose between two extremes. Bronfenbrenner manages to effectively state his claims to the nature of success and failure of the Occupation without taking a hardline stance. This only works stylistically because of his candid approach to writing the short paper. His experience in Japan preceded a greater focus on the practical, rather than theoretical side of economics. His "Economic Aspects of the U.S. Occupation of Japan" is a fine example.

As the Occupation started to become an event long-passed for Bronfenbrenner, his focus on Japan as an expert did not wane. In fact, one might consider that it increased. Instead of being concerned with the results of the Occupation, he became much more interested in matters involving the relations between the U.S. and Japan, and Japanese economic development. At this point in his life Bronfenbrenner had come to understand himself as an Economic Japanologist. Unfortunately, we do not have much of Bronfenbrenner's perspective on his career past Teruko's "occidentation" in the United States and the birth of his children. His autobiography's description of occupationally-related matters all but ends after the decade following his time with SCAP as a tax economist. There are some threads that can be put together about the nature of his work just by examining his papers and limited amounts of correspondence in Duke University's Martin Bronfenbrenner papers. He spent much of his remaining economic career writing articles

and papers and giving lectures on issues related to Japan, amongst other topics, but never ceased to keep professional ties to that country. Entire folders of papers, letters, articles, notes, and scraps are dedicated to “U.S.-Japan Trade Relations” and similar topics. In particular, several people write about the usefulness of “A Japanese-American Economic War?” as published in 1971 in the *Quarterly Review of Economics and Business*. A letter from Robert Z. Aliber recognizes his authority on labor markets, wage differentials, and Japanese economy dated May 25, 1962. Bronfenbrenner would readdress this article again in 1973 with “Some Further Reflections” in the same journal (Various). He would continue to write about Japan in his own works and book reviews all the way until “Macroeconomics and the Japanese Economy” published in 1997, written by H. Yoshikawa. That would be the same year as his death, and so he would carry Japan to his grave it seems. One major work should be given some attention, however. When examining his lifetime contribution to economics as a field, we would be amiss in ignoring it.

Bronfenbrenner’s *Income Distribution Theory*, published in 1971, would be one of his largest individual contributions to economics. The space here is not nearly large enough to devote to a work of its magnitude, and thus a portion of Kenneth Boulding’s (1972) review of the book shall suffice to understand its impact:

Income Distribution Theory is a monumental, almost an encyclopedic, work of scholarship. The name index alone, from Abegglen to Zimmerman, includes about five hundred entries and every name counts. The narrative is continuous, the arguments are clear, and the citations are relevant. As an exposition of the current state of the art in regard to the distribution of wealth and income, this volume is unsurpassed, and it is likely to be a standard work for a considerable time to come. Its point of view might be described as apologetically orthodox. It is essentially that of what the author himself calls the “good old theory” of marginal productivity in its various forms. Nevertheless, a great deal of space is given to the heretics, whose views, for the most part, are-- expounded accurately so that the reader receives a very complete spectrum of thought on this subject. (p. 123)

Income Distribution Theory was an important book, and one that generated a lot of praise. Daniel Orr from the University of Nottingham found the book most useful (1972). Harry G. Johnson, whom Bronfenbrenner turned to for criticism of his drafts, had his own words in separate letters:

I think this will really be a very useful book. As it happens I am teaching distribution theory now, and would use the book as a basic reference if it were available. (1969, April)

I think this should be a really outstanding book; your scholarship is tremendously wide-ranging. (1969, August)

We can see that this was an important work for Bronfenbrenner, and seems like rather orthodox, theoretical work. However, it would not be unreasonable to say its production is unconnected to Japan. While Japan may not have been his muse for this book, in some ways it may have been some of the inspiration. Part of the interest in distribution theory could have developed out of differences between the United States and Japan that he noticed during his time across the Pacific. In Duke's collection, Bronfenbrenner has an entire folder devoted to Japanese income distribution in Box 13. He wrote a paper on "The Japanese Income-Doubling Plan" in 1965. At various points throughout his autobiography, he mentions the disparities of his standard of living and income distribution in Japan as compared the United States. So we have reason to suspect that Japan and his greatest book may not be entirely independent.

It appears that life after Japan would be very productive and, for large portions, happy for Bronfenbrenner. Although we do not have much of his personal reflections on the period through his autobiography, that in itself could be evidence enough. Much of the time he wrote about contained much of his misfortune, unhappiness, and undirected endeavors. Without continuous struggles he may have felt there was less to say. While this is mere speculation, it is a worthwhile question. The sum of his career appears to be a rather successful one, full of the influence of Japan and his eccentricity. An important aspect to note, though, is his more practical focus. His papers and works addressed real questions whether they revolved around reflections on the Occupation and human behavior with the *Tomioka Stories*, lasting economic effects of the Occupation, relations between the United States and Japan, or economic theory in a modern world. With this final piece of Bronfenbrenner's life in hand, we can at last pull the sum of these examinations of different periods to consider a fresh perspective on his life as it related to Japan.

V. Conclusion

Martin Bronfenbrenner was a great many things. He was an intellectual, the writer of numerous papers and an influential book. He was a military man (for a brief time), and an insubordinate one at moments. He was a husband, twice. A father, once. He was an arguer and

debater, an eloquent inciter. He traversed the hard lines of economics only to often fall somewhere in the middle. He was a wild compilation of traits, talents, and mannerisms. Yet, one part of his life that can bring it all together is Japan. It is possible to view his childhood and education as a path to his Japan experience with the Occupation. It is possible to view his love for the country through the experiences he had and the people he met. And it is possible to view his subsequent career as colored by that love and those experiences. He carried Japan with him always, in the form of his wife and children, and in his heart.

After an examination of Bronfenbrenner's life and career, one certain theme emerges. It is not fair, given the scope of this endeavor, to make any causal claims. Nor is there sufficient evidence to make any. However, there is plenty of evidence available to consider that Bronfenbrenner's life and work followed a mutually-stabilizing pattern. His persona followed a winding path through ridicule, oddity, and superiority as a child, to anxiety, depression, and inferiority as a student and economist, and finally to stability, productivity, and happiness as a comfortably-married professional. Likewise his work followed a similar pattern. As a child he outperformed the other children, but alienated himself from them. As a graduate student and young economist, his work was characterized by good but not great performance, output, and career growth. As an established professional his work was characterized by activity, energy, and productivity. He wrote over one hundred papers, reviews, and book chapters. That was no small feat. So instead of comparing Bronfenbrenner to the likes of Milton Friedman, Paul Samuelson, and others that were his contemporaries, it is better to take a step back. Martin Bronfenbrenner was not of that same 'category'. He pushed economics on different folds than did those with a different sort of recognition. Economics through the 1940s, '50s, and '60s became a mathematical and econometric wonderland, one in which Bronfenbrenner often felt he did not belong. Instead, he pursued all of his economic interests, from international and developmental economics, to Economic Japanology and income distribution theory. He was only able to pursue such a breadth due to the zeal and curiosity of a generalist. The drive behind it all though, may have been his experience in Japan. It was not until Bronfenbrenner had finished with SCAP and the Occupation – and had married Teruko – that his depression issues faded and his productivity and success ramped up. Logically Japan cannot be the only factor that produced these results, but it must be a part.

Let us not, however, be the only judge of Bronfenbrenner's life. As a man who was at times concerned with his own reputation, Martin has light to shed on his own view of his life and career. He addresses it the final chapter of his autobiography "Success, Failure, or Merely Nothing?":

As a schoolboy, probably a fifth-grader in Holliston, I was assigned to memorize passage from Longfellow's "Psalm of Life," including the stanza:

Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

...Given this mixed bag of criteria for success or failure in life, where do I see myself as fitting? To make a long story short, half as a minor success, with the remainder a mere nothing... When it comes to one's professional contributions – in my case, as an economist with spillovers into Japanese studies and economic history – my own life has been a partial, small-time, and minor-league success. I live on after retirement in the small ways of footnotes, bibliographies, and directory listing; these hardly constitute "footprints on the sands of time"... But meanwhile I can remain on balance reasonably contented and even self-satisfied – if not exactly in good shape, in better shape than the world at large – most of the time. (Bronfenbrenner, *Marginal Economist*, p. 12:4)

It seems Bronfenbrenner in some ways felt wanting in his legacy, no doubt there was residual regret over not having made a completely "field-changing" discovery, or something of that magnitude. However, he seemed content with what there was, and is there more that one can ask of life? Many would venture a "no".

There is more to be said, and known of Bronfenbrenner, to be sure. This paper could not include nearly all there is to offer in Duke's Martin Bronfenbrenner Collection. An expert with more time, acumen, and familiarity with the Japanese language could likely not only gather more, but different conclusions from his life and works. However, as Bronfenbrenner was a great example, someone must take the first step and ask the first question. So, in best Bronfenbrenner style, we shall end with one question. What can be said of Martin Bronfenbrenner, in light of his work with the Occupation? One answer is that he was a provocative soul. A passage from a last lecture best serves as the last word in any study of his life and work:

There are some who say America has no ideals. I disagree. We too have an ideology. It's the ideology of pluralism. It's the ideology that asserts "a man's a man for all that." It's the ideology that says you try things out, that you work not from ideology but from experience. And it's an ideology that has faith not only in the mass of humanity but in the individual human being. It holds that a child is not the property of the state, nor of his family. He is, how shall I say, a value in himself.

The real question is what do we do? All of us were profoundly shaken, not so much by what we saw in China, but by what it meant for our own society. We were disturbed because we saw far more misery in our own society than we had seen in China. And the misery was increasing. Where will it end? I for one, don't think the American experiment is over. I do believe that we will re-discover the ideology that believes in pluralism, in dignity, in trying things out. That our present period is one that is showing us how far and fatally we wandered from that brilliant invention of the founding fathers of the Republic, I look forward to that re-discovery with confidence. It will come, perhaps not in my generation, but in yours. For I have come to know you. I think you are reaching back again for that tradition and that you will find it. And with that confidence, so long!
(Bronfenbrenner, 1973)

VI.

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