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## Blue Skies to Red Seas

Akasya Bengé

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## **Blue Skies to Red Seas**

### **Abstract**

Essay on Japanese naval and aviation magazines in the University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

### **Keywords**

Aviation, Japanese Navy

### **Disciplines**

Japanese Studies | Library and Information Science

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# Unique at penn

Nothing can more effectually contribute to the Cultivation & Improvement of a Country, the Wisdom, Riches, & Strength, Virtue and Piety, the Welfare & Happiness of a People, than a proper Education of Youth, by forming their Manners, imbuing

06  
Tuesday  
Aug 2019

## Blue Skies to Red Seas

POSTED BY MOLLY DES JARDIN IN POSTS

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[Ed. note: Today's post is by Penn Libraries intern Akasya Benge. Many thanks to Akasya for her painstaking work in inventorying recently acquired Japanese Naval Collection magazines ([Kaigun](#), [Kaigun Gurafu](#), [Umi to Sora](#), and [Teikoku Kaigun](#)) and reflecting on what she found within. Come check the magazines out for yourself in Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center!]

### Tags

advertisements, イラスト, グラフ誌, ヒトラー, 第二次世界大戦, design, East Asia, emperor, ephemera, 雑誌, 軍隊, 軍事, hirohito, hitler, Japan, japanese empire, japanese imperial navy, Japanese magazines, magazines, military, mitsubishi, Navy, Pacific War, photographs, photography, popular culture, publishing history, showa, vintage, war, World War, WW2, WWII, 出版業界, 大衆文化, 大東亜戦争, 天皇陛下, 太平洋戦争, 帝国海軍, 広告, 戦前, 戦中, 日本海軍, 昭和,

I came to the University of Pennsylvania Libraries as an intern with already specialized interests. I studied abroad in Japan in high school, college, and post-graduate, and obtained my master's degree in art history with a focus on premodern Japanese art. However, the project I ended up focusing on at the Penn Libraries was to inventory a sizable collection of 1930s and 1940s Japanese naval magazines. These magazines provide a look into propaganda both prewar and while at war, allowing readers to explore a subject little known or researched in the West – the presentation of upcoming war to the Japanese public.

### ✦ WELCOME

Welcome to Unique at Penn, part of the family of University of Pennsylvania Libraries blogs. Every week this space will feature descriptions and contextualization of items from the collections of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. The site focuses on those materials held by Penn which are in some sense "unique" - drawn from both our special and circulating collections, whether a one-of-a-kind medieval manuscript or a twentieth-century popular novel with generations of student notes penciled inside. See the About page for more on the blog and to contact the editor.

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It seems an odd choice for any university outside Japan, but the University of Pennsylvania Libraries has one of the largest **collections of pre-WWII Japanese naval material** in the United States, primarily dating from the 1920s-1940s. Indeed, it is the rarity of these materials that makes them so fascinating. While the United States understands its own narrative and choices leading up to and the conclusion of World War II, less is known in the Western world about how the Japanese people felt during those same troubled times, especially because of their own efforts to whitewash their imperial past after the war.

The focus of this post is the Japanese naval and aviation magazines held by the Penn Libraries, readily available publications to the Japanese reading public of the time. They have such names as *Umi to Sora* 海と空, a title that translates to "Sea and Sky," and expresses an equally evocative image in Japanese as it does in English. The early 1930s publications of this magazine are scattered with meticulous diagrams of airplanes, as well as peaceful hovering planes gently soaring above the sea.

- October 2013
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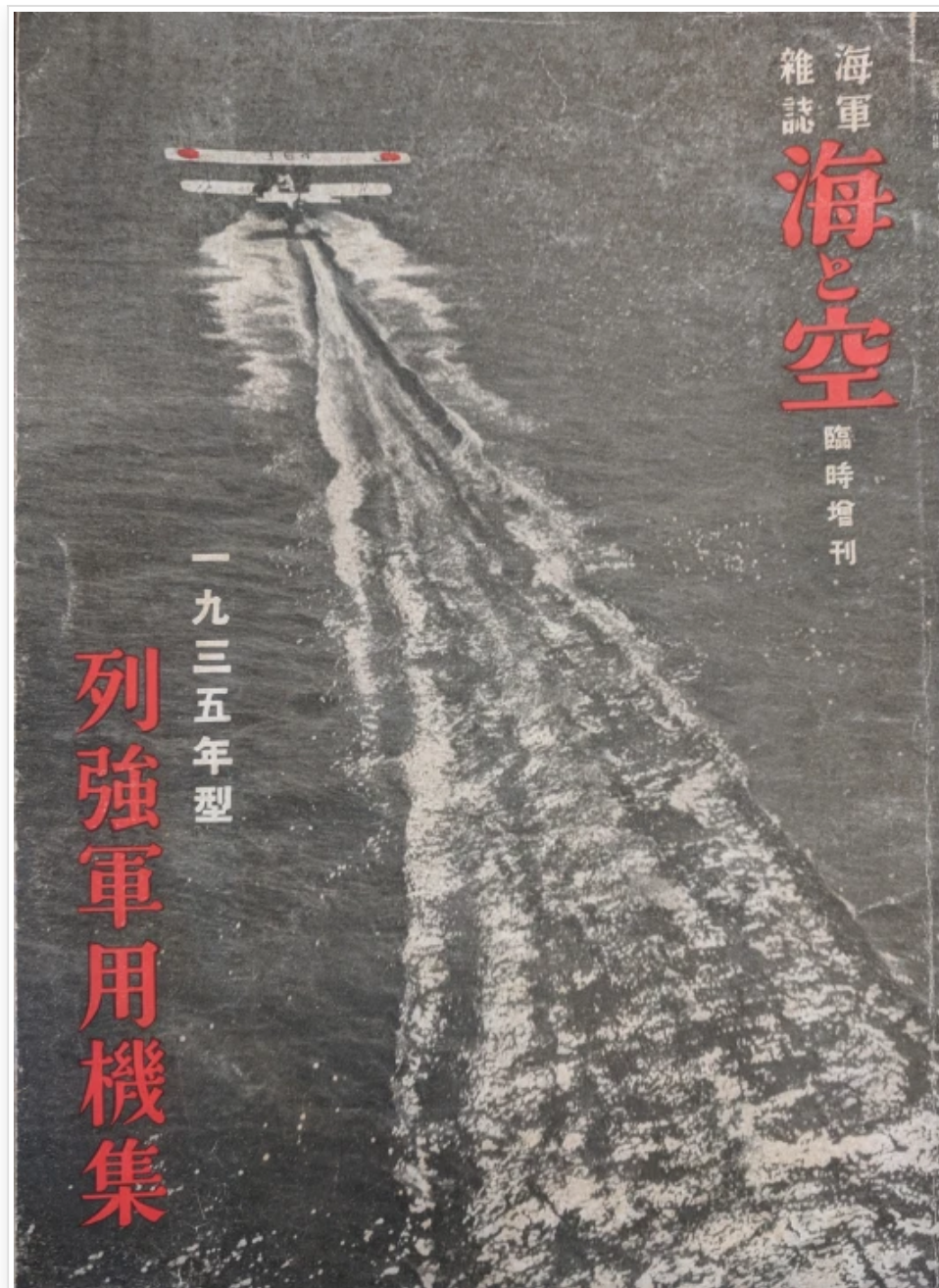
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– Cover of *Umi to Sora*, February 1935

Beautifully detailed drawings of ships – which seem more suited to a children's book than a military magazine – are also contained in these issues. A sense of

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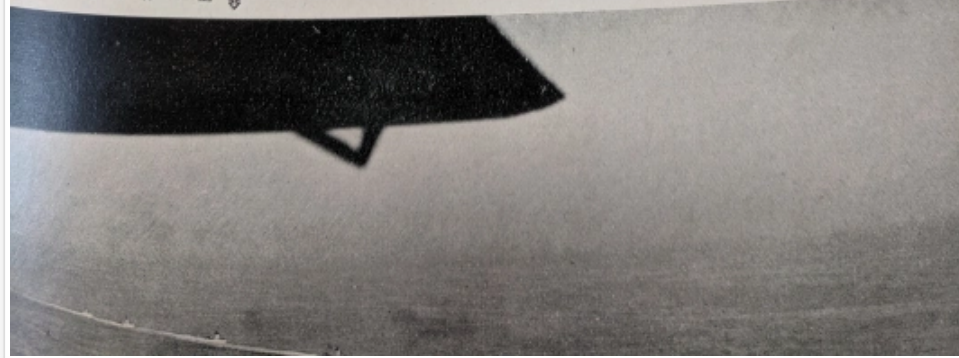
hope pervades the pictures, the feeling that much had been accomplished and so much more awaited. Foreign militaries are approached with a feeling of inquisitiveness and interest, rather than malice and fear. This would quickly change with the 1940s, where Americans became distant and unapproachable, and the Germans, interestingly carefree and friendly. There is even a photograph of Hitler printed in the magazine *Kaigun Gurafu* 海軍グラフ in 1938, both commanding and terrifying; this image provides a stark contrast to the photograph published four years earlier of the Shōwa Emperor (known as Hirohito outside Japan) looking gentle and shy.



(統帥-ラトツヒ左 相首-ニリソツム右てつ向) 陣 兩 の 上 艦 ル-ヴ カ

# 會相雄兩の軸樞ンリルベ・マーロ月五風薫

暮らす歴を海々堂



- Adolf Hilter in *Kaigun Gurafu*, August 1938





— The Shōwa Emperor in *Kaigun Gurafu*, July 1934

Other changes that occur over time in *Sora to Umi* include minute details such as the use of Japanese years rather than the Western calendar, in Chinese numerals: for example, Shōwa 17 昭和十七 as opposed to 1942. Something so barely perceptible may not seem of interest, but as linguists know, a strict demand to use only Japanese words and eliminate all traces of foreign influence marks a time of nationalism, and possibly gave fuel to the upcoming war.



— Cover of *Kaigun Gurafu*, October 1935

In *Kaigun Gurafu* 海軍グラフィック (*Navy Illustrated*), meanwhile, in the middle of 1938 we can observe another subtle change. From the glossy, graphic-design heavy magazines produced earlier, we temporarily receive something reminiscent of the Edo period (1603-1868): heavy, striped paper with feather-like sheets inside reminiscent of Japanese rice paper or *washi* 和紙. The cover, instead of the usual dramatic photograph, is emblazoned with a simple stamp, reminiscent of woodblock prints. This image from May 1938 shows the rising sun, along with a ship and airplane intersecting the top and bottom.



誌·雜究研軍海界世

# 海軍グラフィック

昭和十三年五月五日第三種郵便物認可 毎月一回一日發行  
昭和十三年四月六日印刷 日本 昭和十三年五月一日發行

第六卷 第五號



五月號

NO.64

— Cover of *Kaigun Gurafu*, May 1938



The changes to the cover and the return to a traditional Japanese calendar illustrate the ways in which the Japanese are proclaiming their native heritage. In the 1930s and 40s, Japan was an expanding empire steeped in patriotic media, and there was a strong effort to establish the Japanese emperor's identity as a living god with roots stretching back into the mists of time. This is amply on display here, with the image of the rising sun literally being reinforced with new displays of power – by air and sea.

*Kaigun Gurafu* relies less on imagery and more on facts than *Sora to Umi*. (Although, as its name implies — “gurafu” is short for “photograph,” indicating **an illustrated publication** — it always contained sections of glossy photos of various naval scenes.) However, even this publication inserts a loving tribute to Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō 東郷平八郎 (1848-1934), who began his naval career during the Meiji period (1868-1912) as a dapper and handsome young man, and **even appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine*** on November 8, 1926. Upon his death in 1934, multiple Western nations sent representative dignitaries to his funeral.



– Section on Admiral Tōgō in *Kaigun Gurafu*, July 1934

Another interesting aspect of *Kaigun Gurafu* is the advertisements. The advertisement on the very first page of many mid-1930s issues show a woman proudly displaying her new household gadgets, ranging from everything from a fan to a vacuum.

**三菱クリーナー**

三菱真空電気掃除器

壁にタキのお掃除は、塵や埃が相等空間に飛び散つて又溜りますが、クリーナーでは完全に塵埃を全部吸取つて、とても清潔なスガスガしい気持ちのよいお掃除が簡単に早く出来ます。定価金九十圓附器具一式附

**一手販賣店**  
**三菱商事株式会社**    **三菱電機株式会社**

支店・出張所・特約店 全国各地    本店 東京丸の内 製作所 神戸 名古屋 長崎

カタログ御用は「東京中央郵便局私書箱第188號三菱電機株式会社」宛御申込乞ふ。

— Mitsubishi advertisement in *Kaigun Gurafu*, March 1936

Upon first glance, Western readers may think of a husband indulging his wife in state-of-the-art appliances, but the truth is this may not be the case. Japan has long had a system of women managing household finances, and it seems likely that this practice began in the 1930s, when the financial and industrial conglomerates known as *zaibatsu* 財閥 kept the economy relatively healthy despite the Great Depression ravishing the rest of the world. “Salaryman” サラリーマン (a term that originated in the 1930s) in Japan traditionally turned over their monthly salary to their wives and in return received pocket money or *okozukai* 小遣い to cover their monthly expenses like food, shopping, and entertainment.



三菱電氣扇

一手販賣店  
三菱商事株式會社

三菱電機株式會社  
本店 東京丸ノ内 製作所 神戶・名古屋・長崎



– Mitsubishi advertisement in *Kaigun Gurafu*, September 1937

So, in a magazine that we might assume had targeted men, why were items meant for women being advertised? It is possible that women were buying the magazine. Given that even European and American women's reading habits are not well studied, how much less is known about the reading habits of Japanese women in the 1930s? Even more illuminating are our own attitudes to early Japan, where many assume was repressive for Japanese women. By the Shōwa era, were women as enthusiastic about the military as men? Did they read these magazine in earnest for their sons or themselves?

Regardless, by 1938, the advertisements directed towards women were moved from the front to the back, and the clothing they wore (modern, Western, and freeing) was replaced with traditional kimono. Now a woman, instead of actively cleaning, sits demurely in front of a Mitsubishi space heater, practicing her calligraphy.

海軍グラフィック 第六卷 第一號

昭和十一年一月一日發行  
昭和十一年一月一日發行  
昭和十一年一月一日發行

（毎月一回）日發行

定價 金八十錢 郵税別

三菱電機ストーブ

一手販売店 東京丸ノ内  
三菱商事株式會社 三菱電機株式會社

機械部 東京・丸ノ内 支店・出張所・特約店 全国各地 製作所 名古屋・神戸・長崎

行發日一回一月每

— Mitsubishi advertisement in *Kaigun Gurafu*, January 1938

Another advertisement shows two women, painted as old-fashioned beauties, both in kimono, using a Mitsubishi sewing machine to then make even more kimono. The message is clear: we don't want your Western ideas (or products) here.

January 1939

"THE NAVY GRAPH"

No. 73

(The study of naval affairs in the world)

Published monthly by KAIGUN-KENKYUSHA, Tokyo, Japan.

Price ¥0.80 for one copy (except special number)

海軍グラフ 第七卷 第一號

# 三菱ミシン

丈夫で 使ひ易くて 美しい

足踏式 185 圓

手廻式 160 圓

東寶映畫「軍艦の乙女達」より



昭和十三年十一月十五日印刷  
昭和十三年一月一日發行  
昭和八年四月五日第三種郵便物認可

(毎月一回一日發行)

定價 金八十錢 郵税別

### 三菱ミシン陳列場

東京	丸の内
大阪	大塚
名古屋	名古屋朝日ビル
神戸	元町錦4丁目
京都	東中洲町
東京	麹町2丁目

三菱電機株式会社・三菱商事株式会社

行發社究研軍海

- Mitsubishi advertisement in *Kaigun Gurafu*, January 1939

For me, to study such a different era than the one I normally focused on gave me an opportunity to see the artwork and ideology comparison from one era to a much earlier one. What remained quintessentially Japanese both at war and at peace? I hope it will encourage other researchers to dive further into this unknown tract of research, and bring to light more perspective that is not our own.

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#### About Molly Des Jardin

I'm the Japanese Studies librarian, and liaison for Korean Studies, at the Penn Libraries.

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