Colonialism and the 'Korea Problem' in the Historiography of Modern Japan: A Review Article

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BY THE TIME EMPEROR MEIJI died in 1912, mourned as the first "modern" emperor, Japan had already acquired a sizeable colonial realm. Two years earlier, Japanese newspapers and magazines had celebrated the annexation of Korea, congratulating themselves on living in an empire that was now 15 million people more populous and almost a third larger than it had been prior to annexation. For journalists and politicians at the time, the phrase "Chōsen mondai" (the Chōsen question) served as a euphemism for the panoply of issues relating to Japanese interests in the Korean peninsula. Yet despite this contemporary recognition of the significance of empire, English-language studies of Japan have been slow to interweave the colonial experience into the history of modern Japan. Today, for modern historians, the question of how, or even whether, to incorporate these events into the history of Japan is itself a quandary—what might be termed the "Korea problem" in modern Japanese historiography.

This paper asks whether the history of modern Japan, especially the Meiji period, can be rightly isolated as "island history" or whether it should be contextualized within Japan's deepening colonial engagements. I argue that although the latter offers a more comprehensive history, English-language histories have tended to emphasize a form of nation-centered history at the expense of those forces transcendent to the nation, especially when those forces have derived from Asia. One consequence has been that the relationship with the colonies, in particular Korea, has been largely written out of Japanese history. When raised, the "Chōsen mondai" has been relegated to a foreign history, usually viewed as part of the evolution of empire as narrated through the acquisition of colonial holdings. Yet, it is the dynamism of Japan that is highlighted in such narratives; the centrifugal forces of empire underscored as the centripetal forces are glossed over. As can be seen in some of the major works on the

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Meiji period, much of the literature is marked by a top-down, metrocentric approach that renders colonial history tangential to the main narratives of the modern Japanese nation and, in some instances, comes precariously close to reproducing versions of Japanese colonial discourse. *How* colonial history is written, therefore, is just as critical as ensuring that the colonial experience be integrated into modern Japanese history. More recent studies, joining in a wider effort initiated by scholars of European empires, have begun to offer a more varied account of the many relationships between the islands and the peninsula. As these works are beginning to show, attention to colonial history offers a means of challenging the bounds of Japanese national history and suggests that many features of Japan's modern sense of self, including the writing of national history, were developed in relation to its colonies.

Islands Versus Empire

Over the last two decades one of the most productive areas of study in European history has been colonial history. Ever since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, an ever growing number of researchers—be they champions of Said's thesis or not—have been challenging conventional approaches to the history of Europe's relations with its empires, posing questions about an earlier generation's willingness to consider Europe as a historical subject insulated from its colonies. Instead, a new vision of Europe as a continent that across a wide spectrum of areas was deeply entwined with its colonies has emerged.[1] This push has been undertaken by a wide range of scholars with often startlingly different agendas, making the debates quite cantankerous and leaving battle scars all around. Historians employing a postcolonial approach have gained the most publicity—and earned the most jeers—for bringing discourse analysis and questions of representation to bear on a field that conventionally had been devoted to the political, economic, and institutional frameworks of colonial rule.[2] Other historians, sometimes using less radical methodologies and less heated rhetoric, have begun to write social and gender histories of empire.[3] The insights of anthropologists have often been crucial to these historical reevaluations.[4] Still others have sought to find points of commonality among these contending groups that have often tended to speak past each other.[5]

In the case of British history, where some of the most far-reaching research has been conducted, these trends have led one scholar to characterize traditional British Imperial history as a "Humpty-Dumpty" that has fallen (Fieldhouse 1984). Just how far it has plunged and who gave the most decisive push remains a question of debate, yet for many scholars, though by no means all, the new research has led to a reconsideration of the way British history is to be written. It has been shown that the most quintessential of British pastimes, high tea, depended on the complex labor, financing, and production strategies of the imperial plantation economy (Mintz 1985);

[1]For one of the most sweeping treatments of this literature, see the introduction in Cooper and Stoler 1997. For two other useful collections representative of the variety of these approaches, see Dirks 1992 and Prakash 1995.

[2]For one review of this literature, see Kennedy 1996.

[3]For one discussion of recent work on women and empire, see Buzard 1993.

[4]See Cohn 1996 and the collaborative work of Cooper and Stoler 1997.

[5]For two articles using the work of David Fieldhouse as a starting point, see Howe 1998 and Darby 1998; for a more postcolonial perspective, see Kennedy 1998.

that British dietary patterns and sense of style were transformed by colonial products (Walvin 1997); that attitudes towards British imperial activities shaped the political and cultural life of even the most remote provincial towns in the eighteenth century (Wilson 1995); that women either in the feminist movement at home or traveling in the colonies served to support imperial ideologies (Burton 1994; Chaudhuri and Strobel 1992); and that British self-conceptions of race, class, and gender were formed through various relationships with the colonies (McClintock 1995). All these areas—and many more—of what had earlier been seen as separate aspects of the history of Britain have been shown to have been anything but isolated from complex interactions with the empire.[6] As Bernard Cohn has most forcefully argued, the "metropole and colony have to be seen in a unitary field of analysis" (1996, 4).

The state of affairs in English-language studies of the Japanese Empire is, of course, quite different. A field in its infancy, the study of Japanese colonial history has certainly not developed an equivalent body of scholarship meriting the label "Humpty-Dumpty." Part of the task is simply to get broader questions of empire onto the agenda of historians of modern Japan. Marius Jansen, despite his earlier important work on Japanese Pan-Asianists in China (1954), could write as late as 1984, "imperialism never became a very important part of national consciousness" (76). More recently, in the 1997 *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, Helen Hardacre in her introduction to the volume's more than fifty essays—what she calls a "collective assault on the entirety of Meiji Japan" (xvii)—repeatedly notes the importance of the colonies and colonial subjects in this period. Yet few of the historical papers in the volume actually pursue this line of inquiry. The opening essays, which ask, "What is Meiji?" and "What was Meiji?" pursue a multitude of fascinating avenues, but again the fact that Meiji Japan was a colonial power is barely raised.[7] Work in other fields will certainly not provide answers for questions posed about the Japanese empire, but as the centrality of the colonizing experience for Japanese modernity gains more consideration, the paths followed by colleagues in other fields may point in some general directions for writing a more diverse history of modern Japan, with a fuller accounting of the place of empire. In particular, the attempts by historians to bridge the division between a foreign history of the colonies and an internal history of Europe and its constitutive nation-states are most suggestive.

Historians of Japan, like their counterparts in other fields, have devoted considerable energy in recent years to calling into question many nationalist understandings that have continued to resonate in studies of the Japanese past. Work in areas as diverse as social ideologies (Gluck 1985), the emperor system (Fujitani 1996) and the invention of tradition (Vlastos 1998), to name just a few, has highlighted the power of nationalism to create a form of history and memory that has served to naturalize and deny the historicity of the nation. Such trends, however, have generally not yet been carried over to the nation's relationship to its colonial empire, in particular to challenge the common assumption that Japan's modern development remained insulated from interactions that with the colonies that were constitutive of the nation itself. Indeed, in studies of Japanese history the stories of the islands and

[6]Of course, an even more restrictive view has focused on England rather than Britain, making an interesting comparison with the issues of Hokkaido and Okinawa. For the issue of "little Englandism," see Samuel 1989.

[7]One significant exception to this is the essay by Seung-Mi Han (Hardacre 1997, 688–701). In her overview of the volume, Carol Gluck makes a related point that not enough Asian views of Meiji have been included (1997, 27).

the colonies generally follow two distinct plot lines, reproducing the division between home and abroad captured in the colonial phrases *naichi* (internal lands or Japan proper) and *gaichi* (external lands or outlying colonies).[8] This is a style of nation-centered history, where as the primary subject of the study of the past, the nation is neatly separated from the colonies and seen as developing independently. The transnational processes inherent to empire are truncated, reinforcing assumptions about national subjectivity and ensuring that history remains in service to the nation.

Authoritative histories such as the *Cambridge History of Japan* reflect how this separation has become one of the fundamental orientations of the modern Japanese history field (Duus 1988). In the twentieth-century volume, the islands and the colonies are compartmentalized into formal chapter divisions in which a "Domestic Politics" is juxtaposed to an "External Relations." This organization may not in itself present a problem, but what is remarkable is the degree of impermeability between these sections. There is no discussion of the largest colony, Korea, outside of the chapters on foreign affairs—this despite the increasingly interlinked economies, the headline-grabbing Japanese involvement in the peninsula, the role of Japan's colonies in its relations with Western powers, the substantial emigration to Korea, the issue of the colonies in the articulation of the limits of liberal thought, and the very obvious fact that Korea, as an annexed territory, was arguably not part of Japan's "external relations" at all. The force of such history splits the narrative of modern Japan into two solitudes—the first, a domestic history untainted by interactions with the continent, and the second, a history of the colonies penetrated by the forces of the metropole. Such an organization of history precludes the possibility of exploring how these two story lines were part of the same historical processes and how Japanese modernity (as well as narratives of that modernity) emerged from these engagements. History remains harnessed to the nation and, in turn, preserves the self-justifying claim of the nation to an independent subjectivity that was so essential to colonial ideology.

Monographic studies on the Meiji period, whether focusing on domestic or foreign history, have in particular been informed by this separation. In one of the last decade's most highly acclaimed books on the Meiji period, *Japan's Modern Myths* (1985), there are indeed glimpses of empire in the ideological realm which Carol Gluck so engagingly portrays. Beginning with the promulgation of the constitution and ending with the highly publicized funeral of the Meiji emperor, Gluck's treatment of ideology covers such topics as the creation of a modern monarchy, the growing romantic attachment to an increasingly disappearing rural life, the promotion of self-help ideas, and the glory of the "national polity" (*kokutai*), to name just a few. Notable for its textured use of abundant historical sources, *Japan's Modern Myths* shows ideology functioning in places beyond the usual ideological redoubts such as the grand speeches made by leading officers of the state. Instead, the workings of ideology are just as likely to be located in the minutiae of everyday social life, whether in the formation of local punctuality associations (184) or the proliferation of "get-rich-quick market fevers" (161). Such a perspective makes for more than just an entertaining read, for as Gluck argues, the creation of ideology in the late Meiji period was not merely a top-down creation of ambitious oligarchs eager to engineer society according to a prescribed vision. It was instead a "fitful and inconsistent process" (4), a "trial-and-

[8]It is important to note that even the boundaries between these two shifted over time, particularly in relation to Okinawa and Hokkaido.

error affair" (4), which involved a wide range of social actors such that there were always a multiplicity of ideological formations identifiable from the "concrete and particular social history" (8) of the period.

Yet despite the range of subjects covered and the depth of materials used, there is a gaping rent in Gluck's otherwise rich tapestry. This is ideology without empire. Gluck gives us not an emperor without clothes—we learn, after all, that Emperor Meiji delighted in wearing striking generalissimo outfits—but an emperor shorn of his empire. This is ideology shaped by *bunmei kaika,* Japanese versions of "civilization and enlightenment," but Gluck's portrayal of the uses of *bunmei kaika*, whether manifest in the construction of rail lines or in the dances held for diplomats in the *Rokumeikan* (Crystal Palace), is again articulated without empire. Ideology here faces two directions: inward, as a way of rethinking society, and toward the West, as a means of renegotiating the unequal treaties and achieving equality with the powers.

This gaze to the West has fascinated foreign scholars of Japan since the earliest historical research on modern Japan. Indeed, going back at least as far as George Sansom's magisterial *The Western World and Japan* (1950), it is no exaggeration to note that the dialogic processes involved in Japan's modern political, economic, social, and intellectual history have been seen as being almost exclusively engaged with the West. The metanarrative of modern Japan, from the time of Perry's arrival in Tokyo through the Meiji Restoration and up until the Second World War, has traced the various "turns to" and "revolts against" the West. Suggestive of the inextricability and power of Eurocentric narratives, the West remains the sole locus of external change, progress, and influence, a style of metanarrative that has generally meant the eclipse of Asia. With few exceptions, most notably the work of Joshua Fogel whose writings ranging from intellectual biographies of prominent China historians to travel writing on China has raised some of these issues (1984, 1989, 1995, 1996), the significance of Asia during the Meiji period has been neglected. Yet during this period, with the takeover of Taiwan in 1895 and the annexation of Korea in 1910, Japan emerged as a significant player in the colonizing contest in Asia. Gluck's study of ideology in the Meiji period is one of the most masterful examinations of this "turn to the West" yet, like her predecessors, she leaves out the growing centripetal forces of empire in her treatment of the period. The myths of modern Japan can indeed be found in the social fevers of urban dwellers, yet missing from this account is the growing hold of another set of modern myths—those modern colonizing myths—over the imagination of a population mobilized in support of empire.

To be sure, *Japan's Modern Myths* does not suggest that Meiji Japan stood in "splendid isolation" from continental Asia. Yet the connections Gluck draws are limited to the wars with China and Russia. In the first war, China served as a kind of "ideological mirror" for Japan to redefine itself. Both official and public writers vilified China as an "enemy of civilization," referring to it derogatively as "pigtail land." The consequence, as Gluck argues, was that this war "enhanced national confidence and pride of empire at the expense of an age-old respect for China" (1985, 135–36). Gluck concludes that by the end of the Russo-Japanese war the imperial image was at its "full meridian," for now the emperor was not just a symbol of progress but one of empire (90). With this oblique reference to the takeover of Taiwan after the Sino-Japanese war and the protectorate status imposed on Korea after the Russo-Japanese War, Gluck ends any explicit discussion of empire. But these wars represented only the initial steps in building a colonial empire. Possession of Korea and Taiwan now entailed administering a vastly expanded stretch of territory and

mobilizing a new population—a task that was to stretch thin the ideological resources of both public and private Japanese institutions.

Nonetheless, the colonial presence in *Japan's Modern Myths* is irrepressible. Insinuated throughout Gluck's wide-ranging source material is the consistent appearance, however unremarked upon by the author, of materials with colonial content. Songs were written with titles like "The Future of Asia," with lines wistfully speaking of the joy of seeing the Japanese flag "wave o'er the Himalayas" (1985, 131). In the four million copies of his officially solicited commentary on the Imperial Rescript on Education, Inoue Tetsujiro nonchalantly listed a string of "weak" Asian countries such as Korea, and wrote of a China that "clings to the classics," contrasting them to the "progress" achieved in Japan (quoted in Gluck 1985, 129). At Emperor Meiji's funeral, we get a glimpse of the empire coming home in the presence of representatives of the Japanese resident communities in Korea, Taiwan, and Sakhalin, who traveled the length of the empire to pay their final observances to the monarch under whom their new foreign homes had been made possible (214). Buddhist monks, like their Christian counterparts, began to venture into the colonies, sending missionaries overseas to Korea and Taiwan (138). Itō Hirobumi could make a speech on the twentieth anniversary of the promulgation of the constitution in his capacity as one of its chief architects in 1908, but only by leaving his current post as resident-general of the colonial state in Korea, one year before being assassinated by the Korean patriot An Chunggŭn (146). Thus, even though *Japan's Modern Myths* does not explicitly explore the relationship between Meiji ideology and Japan's role as a colonial power, the colonial question nevertheless sneaks into its pages through Gluck's rich source materials—an indication of just how difficult it is to divorce the islands from empire.

The inattention to the empire on the home front that up until the mid-1990s has characterized the study of the Meiji period has been complemented by studies on the empire that tend almost exclusively to trace the forces emanating from the islands. This is a vision of colonial history as external history, a history of "over-there" beyond the nation, where Japanese act and impact, shaping colonial societies through the policies and institutions that largely constitute the subjects of this style of investigation. This approach rests on the same assumption about the insularity of the islands that underpins much domestic history of Japan. So, too, does it confirm the uniquely transformative power of the West, since Japanese colonialism is seen as possible only after the Western-style reforms of the Meiji project have been completed at home and then are ready to empower the move abroad.

One of the earliest efforts to take up the question of empire both conceptually and empirically was the first volume of a now completed trilogy, *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*, edited by Ramon Myers and Mark Peattie (1984).[9] The volume brings together thirteen essays related to Korea, Taiwan, and the South Pacific Islands—the early colonial possessions that the editors identify as the "formal empire." Unlike the two subsequent volumes, which extensively treat Japan's relationship with China and the wartime empire, the first volume places colonial rule and strategy at the center of inquiry. Many of the contributions revolve around questions concerning the origins and motivations for Japanese imperialism, the process of empire building, and the ways and means of colonial administration. This is the history of imperial policy: Why and how was Korea annexed? How were the colonies policed? What was colonial education? How was law deployed? What was agricultural policy? These are

[9]For the other two volumes, see Duus, Myers, and Peattie 1989, 1996.

all significant questions relating to policy, institutions, and infrastructure. A number of the articles examine the reaction of local colonial subjects to the actions undertaken by the metropole. The essays in this volume significantly expanded the available material on the Japanese Empire in English, raised many new questions for later scholarship, and, because of the full range of topics and accessibility, continue to be widely used in classrooms to this day.

As spelled out most clearly in Mark Peattie's introduction that appears in the first volume, this is foreign history where the emphasis is on the centrifugal forces of empire. For Peattie the colonial effort is understood as an "extension of the Meiji pattern of national development" (1984, 43), or, as he more sweepingly asserts, "all that Japan undertook in its colonies during the first quarter century of the empire was based on Meiji experience in domestic reform" (23). The vision of empire offered in the book is one where interactions between the home islands and the colonies are primarily unilateral, from the former towards the latter. Japan not only "extended" and "undertook," as Peattie describes, but also sought to "carry out" and "bring about"—doing so "with vigor, confidence and determination" (24). The center, be it Tokyo or the seat of rule in the colony itself, emerges as virtually the sole locus of agency. Writing the history of empire as an outward flow from center to periphery is a necessary part of understanding the Japanese colonial enterprise, but the subject that remains curiously unbroached in these essays is the impact of the colonial experience on Japan itself.

Underlying the approach to empire found in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* is a divorce, both temporal and geographical, between the political, socioeconomic, and ideological processes occurring in the islands and those on the colonies. By presenting the "Meiji experience" as having been first consolidated, even completed, at home independent of any interaction with the continent, Peattie is able to speak of the "Meiji experience" in terms little different from any other commodity produced during the period: it is ready to be exported to the colonies. Though the historical perspective of the book does not look inward, the assumption in this approach is one shared with domestic histories in that the "Meiji experience" is seen as having been achieved in isolation from relations with Asia. That the "Meiji experience" itself was in part shaped by the islands' interactions with the continent prior to the advent of formal colonialism is an issue not taken up by Peattie. Tokyo and its local seats of colonial rule molded local society in a unidirectional historical flow where colonial societies, while not quite inert, are only included in terms of reactions, whether favorable or not, to the actions of the metropole. Yet for all the intensity and depth of the interactions described in the volume, Japanese society on the home islands remains strangely untouched by any countereffects of its experience as a colonizer. Centripetal forces are almost nowhere to be found.

Peattie does mention one important exception: rice (1984, 36–7). Samuel Pao-San Ho's chapter on colonialism and development (347–99) pursues this issue more fully. Ho's piece, like that of Ramon Myers and Yamada Saburō (420–52), traces various policies that integrated a number of sectors in the Korean and Taiwanese colonial economies with those of the home islands. Ho, however, moves beyond a discussion of how colonial policy altered the economic landscape of Korea and Taiwan to note that this integration enabled the import into Japan of massive quantities of cheap rice. As Ho makes clear, this cheap import was a key link in the economy, which helped prevent "the terms of trade between agriculture and industry" from shifting "adversely for the modern sector" (349). This encouraged migration from rural areas into urban factories and decreased pressures on wages, which, in turn,

permitted industries to increase profits and further invest in productivity. Rice imports, by keeping the price of a staple food low, also played an important role in preventing the type of socioeconomic problems that eventually led to the urban riots of 1918 (349–50). Here, the centrality of the colonies to the socioeconomic conditions leading to Japan's much lauded rapid industrialization is manifest. The consequences of colonialism impinged, directly or indirectly, on the everyday life of Japanese farmers and urban workers as well as the investment strategies of the modern industrial sector. Ho's brief discussion of this staple in the Japanese diet demonstrates that to ignore the relationship between imperialist policies and domestic developments is to miss a crucial dynamic in the history of modern Japan. Like the examples of empire that slide into *Japan's Modern Myths,* the case of rice in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* hints at the deep interactions with the colonies that to varying degrees shaped the intellectual, political, and socioeconomic dynamics of the islands.

Modernization and Empire

If colonial history has not disturbed the bounds of nation-centered history for Japan, it has also been presented as the triumph of the Japanese nation. The reticence to question the bounds of national history has spilled over to the ways that interactions between Japan and its empire have been recounted—a question that relates to the use of the colonial archive. As a modern discourse articulated by the media, bureaucracy, military, and a new field of colonial experts, colonialism produced a vast quantity of information, often organized in the form of statistics, charts, typologies, and the like that are most helpful to the historian. But with few exceptions this information was produced to support, strengthen, and maintain colonial rule, more often than not by appealing to modern notions about the developmental potential of colonialism. This modern sensibility can prove alarmingly seductive, especially for a field that has struggled with the implications of postwar modernization theory for the writing of history. Precisely because of the modernist congruence between the ideological orientation of the colonial archive and modernization theory, there is the danger that a history based on these sources may merely confirm colonialist interpretations about their endeavors—in short, reproduce features of colonial discourse in the form of a history of empire.

This dilemma is most evident in accounts of the rise of the Japanese Empire. As articulated in Mark Peattie's introductory essay to *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*, this is a narrative that begins with the formal acquisition of Taiwan, follows the path of empire building through the annexation of Korea, the expansion into the south Pacific, the advance into Manchuria, and the eventual move into China proper.[10] In Peattie's time line, the year 1931 takes on special significance. The expansion into Manchuria in this year stands as the beginning of what he refers to as an "ill-considered adventure." This turning point in the narrative of empire is highly reminiscent of an earlier generation's notion of the "dark valley," at one time used to label what was seen as the irrational betrayal of the Meiji period's enlightened reform legacy by a military bent on aggression. Significantly, 1931 is the *start* of "reckless adventurism" (1984, 50), since according to Peattie's account the colonial empire was running quite

[10]Notably, this time line omits the earlier expansion of the Japanese state into Hokkaido and Okinawa.

smoothly before the invasion of Manchuria. To make this point, Peattie engages in a bit of counterfactual history, wondering what might have happened had the policies of the 1920s been able to continue. He concludes "it is possible that the positive effects of its colonial strategies would have been more enduring and the memories of its presence less bitter . . . . But"—a key word here—"largely through the unchecked ambitions of the home government . . . the empire was overtaken by disaster" (46). This statement is a clear indication of the metropolitan perspective of this history of empire. The question must be asked, for *whom* was this disastrous? Peattie's notion of disaster conflates the interests of all subjects across the empire, as though the interests of intellectuals, peasants, and workers in Korea were all one and differed little from those of statesmen in Tokyo. This may very well have been the vision in Tokyo once the consequences of the move into Manchuria were more fully appreciated, but for many colonial subjects in the Korean peninsula, Taiwan, or the south Pacific, 1931 was less a "disaster" than 1895, 1910, or 1920. This is not to gainsay the geopolitical importance of 1931. However, pinpointing 1931 as the start of disaster *for the empire in its entirety* is to privilege the vision of empire offered by its architects in Tokyo and to downplay what by 1931 amounted to the several decades of disasters experienced by many colonial subjects.

Peattie's designation of 1931 as the start of disaster depends on a positive appraisal of colonial policy for the two preceding decades, an evaluation buttressed by his generous treatment of the civilizing claims of empire. To use Peattie's own notion of an "extension" of the Meiji experience onto the colonies, it would not be unfair to say that what has been "extended" is the historiographic tendency of early research on the Meiji period to emphasize modernization. In his piece, the awe held by an earlier generation of historians for the accomplishments of the Meiji oligarch flourishes, only here this wonder has been shifted from the domestic front to the colonies.[11] The legacy of the "superbly successful modernization effort" (1984, 23) of the early Meiji period is by late Meiji, according to Peattie, in the hands of colonial officials characterized by their "determination" (25), "competence" (26), "quality" (26), "dedication" (26), "integrity" (26), and "scrupulous" honesty (31). They were "imbued with a vigorous sense of public service typical of Japanese civil government and took their jobs seriously" (26). The material signs of modernity—railways and bridges (37), together with "impressively modern buildings" (25)—are highlighted as are those features of colonial rule that Peattie emphasizes as "rationalizing," whether they be law (29), land tenure (31), or the central administrative system (25). In short, Peattie argues, colonialism "brought peace, order, and development" (43).

This unqualified representation of Japan as at once modern internally and modernizing externally is supported by Peattie's depiction of the colonies. For if Japan is to be seen as modern and its colonial enterprise as modernizing, then colonies are anything but modern. His choice of adjectives alone reveals the contrast. Korea, "that unhappy country" (1984, 17) with an "obdurate" (16) government, is seen as a society with a "derelict nature" (24). But this is not a problem of descriptive passages alone. Peattie's assumptions, by equating Japanese colonization with modernization, make it difficult for him to come to terms with resistance to Japanese policy in the colonies. According to the logic of his account, opposition to rational administration intent on bringing "order and progress" (25) can only be seen as running counter to the modernizing process and thus assumes a less-than-progressive function. This leads the

[11]For critiques on modernization theory in Japanese history, see Dower 1975, Kano 1976, and Najita 1993.

author to underplay both the legitimacy of nationalist resistance as well as the harshness of Japanese colonial policies. In his discussion of Korea, Peattie suggests that the rise of "a sense of Korean national identity" occurred at a most inconvenient time, for it contributed to resistance through its "sentiment" and "conservatism" (24). Using a vocabulary remarkably close to that of the colonial administration itself, Peattie depicts Korea as "most sensitive and trouble prone" (27). Most surprisingly, what repressive colonial policies are acknowledged by Peattie to have been undertaken are depicted as stemming from Korean resistance rather than as part of the colonizing project itself. "Such resistance," he writes, "made externally imposed modernization in Korea a matter of ruthless enforcement" (24). As though Koreans had only themselves to blame for the ruthlessness of the otherwise enlightened Japanese colonialists, Peattie asserts unquestioningly that the "resistance of a fearful, obstinate, and antagonized colonized people made reform a matter of harsh enforcement" (19).

To be sure, Peattie acknowledges that these same administrators made mistakes. He writes, "Japan's colonial agents kicked and dragged Korea into conformity with Japan's modern values and institutions, rather than explaining the objectives or rewards of modernization" (1984, 25). This statement is rife with troubling assumptions. It accepts the colonialist proposition that Japan had a monopoly on modernity in East Asia, that there was no modernizing force internal to Korea, and that Japanese claims to be carrying out what was tantamount to a *mission civilatrice* constituted a sufficient rationale for carrying out its unilateral policies in Korea. It further implies that Koreans would have been willing to acquiesce to colonial rule if only Japan had played the role of teacher more effectively. In this way, the ruthlessness could have been avoided and Korean support for colonial rule would have been garnered.

These assumptions allow Peattie to present the harshness of Japanese colonial role—the kicking and dragging—as somehow superficial, an ephemeral by-product of colonialism that should not detract from the larger modernizing project. Repression of the March First Movement in which thousands were killed over several months is seen as no more than a "spasm of colonial repression" (1984, 21), as though it was momentary rather than the culmination of nine years of brutal rule. Such cases, Peattie feels, should not tarnish the image of an otherwise competent and high-quality bureaucracy. Pointing out that in the early years a "few undesirables" may have created some problems, Peattie concludes that they were "shaken out of the system" (26). On the whole, "one must give Japanese colonial administrators high marks as a group" (26). Here, the negative aspects of colonialism are not only incidental to the program of reform, but come to rest on the shoulders of a few wayward officials. Peattie warns the reader not to be too severe: "the ruthlessness and insensitivity with which Japan set about applying the Meiji domestic strategies overseas should not cloud our judgements about their purpose, work, or effectiveness" (25). Once these mavericks were removed, it is insinuated, these excesses were ended. The undeniable harshness of Japanese colonial rule is in this way perfunctorily acknowledged, but at the same time it is dismissed as little more than a by-product of colonialism, either a temporary excess or the consequence of maverick officials which, Peattie suggests, should not be given undue attention. Instead, stripped of these "incidentals," the Japanese colonial project reveals its true civilizing, if not quite benevolent nature. Such an approach, by separating the repression of colonialism from what Peattie sees as the fundamental enterprise of colonialism, allows the author to salvage colonialism's self-proclaimed progressive force.

It should hardly be necessary to point to the many works that have challenged the notion that processes of modernization lead to social results that can be solely characterized as more free. Sheldon Garon has taken up this line of inquiry for Japan (1994). Citing the work of Foucault and recent trends in the study of Nazi Germany, Garon argues that the state's very modern techniques of social mobilization and control show that the "concept of modernization can be used better to understand the nature of Japanese authoritarianism" (350). Showing how this relationship between modernization and authoritarianism manifested itself in 1920s campaigns for the improvement of everyday life as well as the modernization of gender and sexuality, Garon shows that many members of the growing middle class considered their activities in these often less-than-progressive activities as highly "modern." Unfortunately, Garon makes no connection between these activities and that realm of the state that in these years was without doubt the most authoritarian, namely colonial rule. Yet his point applies equally to the Korean colony, though the connection between authoritarianism and modernity arguably started on the peninsula earlier than on the home islands.

In fact, one does not have to go beyond the covers of *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* to observe this point. Ching-chih Chen, in his contribution to this first volume, "Police and Community Control Systems in the Empire," shows how the colonial police system was the most modern of institutions (1984, 213–39). From its first inception, police organization was centralized and hierarchical, extending its reach from the capital down to townships with populations of roughly 800 (223). What enabled this unprecedented penetration of local society by central authorities were the very forms of organization that Peattie indicates were part of the rationalization of administration. But in the case of the police, brute force served as a standard part of their policy repertoire. Not infrequently, as Chen describes, the police played a crucial role in implementing reforms not popular with the Korean population, whether in the controversial land census of 1910–18 (230) or in the introduction of high-yield rice strains more palatable to Japanese tastes (231). This involvement was not the result of "maverick" officials, as Peattie would have us believe, nor was it a temporary function. Rather, Chen shows the extensive and sustained efforts of the police force. Their strength was beefed up after the March First Movement (224), and by the time of the war with China, the police played a crucial function in recruiting young Koreans to volunteer for the Japanese army while providing the muscle behind the ideological drive to convert Koreans into loyal imperial subjects (233). Thus, contrary to Peattie's depiction, Chen shows how the police force underpinned a wide range of Japanese policies essential to colonial rule and made the very changes Peattie has labeled as modernization possible. In these ways, Peattie's piece reflects two of the broader tendencies in much of the early English language writing on the Japanese empire: a metrocentric perspective and an insufficiently critical approach to the modernizing claims of colonial officials. The consequence is a form of history that comes unwittingly close to legitimizing and heralding the pre-1931 stages of colonial rule.

The Empire Strikes Back

Since the mid-1990s there has been a renewed interest in matters relating to the Japanese Empire. A number of works, benefiting from the boom in postcolonial studies and the research on European colonialism in challenging the traditional

assumptions of imperial history, have begun to bridge the gap between the islands and the colonies and avoid some of the pitfalls of earlier histories of empire. These studies on late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Japan have been less eager to accept either the imperviousness of the boundaries dividing the domestic from the colonial or the tendency to see the dynamism of empire as heading solely in an outward direction. One of these studies, Stefan Tanaka's *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (1993), tackles these issues by focusing on the rise of *Tōyōshi* (History of the East), Japanese studies of Asian history. Tanaka argues that the creation of this historical field was part of an effort by a number of Japanese historians led by Shiratori Kurakichi to create a realm that would allow the assertion of an identity at once distinct from and equal to the West. "Through this concept, which contained and ordered the pasts of Japan and *Tōyō*, the Japanese created their own modern identity" (11). This point alone is a welcome counter to the preoccupation with the usual narrative of the "turn to the West," for Asia is brought back into the story of modern Japan—and not just as an interesting sidelight but as a vital element in Japanese attempts to redefine their position in the global order. The quest for modernity and equality with the West, such a dominant motivation in these years, becomes a matter of not only battleships, renegotiations of unequal treaties, and the wearing of Western fashions, but also one of history and identity in which Japanese discourse on Asia played a crucial function in defining a new sense of a national self. Indeed, this was a history of both Japan and its colonies that not only offered powerful representations of the colonizer-colonized relationship, but just as importantly also rested on reified division between the two, despite the transnational historical processes unleashed by colonialism. As Tanaka argues, Japan was *with* Asia as part of *Tōyō*, and *apart* from Asia as the self-proclaimed "civilized" leader of the group. The bounds of the nation were preserved in this history at the same time as the colonies helped define that history as national. The creation of a discourse on *Tōyō*, Tanaka continues, prepared the ideological grounds—those modern colonial myths necessary for mobilizing the population in support of imperial aspirations. In this way, Tanaka seeks to interweave the function played by representations of Asia into Meiji and Taishō ideological worlds.

Yet, in examining the rise of *Tōyōshi*, Tanaka has the unfortunate tendency to reduce Asia to China. Though entitled *Japan's Orient*, the book would have more aptly reflected its content if called "Japan's China." Left out of his discussion of *Tōyōshi* is any systematic treatment of the voluminous historiographical literature dealing with Korea. References to the peninsula are found in the work—most notably, mentions are made of Shiratori's writings on Tan'gun (1993, 82–84), the rise of *Mansenshi* (Manchurian-Korean history, 247–48), and debates concerning Korea's connection to ancient Japanese culture (91, 155, 171–72). The appearance of these remarks is testament to the difficulty of delving into the ideological sphere of Meiji and Taishō Japan without explicitly dealing with Korea. But these brief references are not incorporated into the body of his argument.[12] This is curious, for if he is interested in pursuing the relationship between historical knowledge and imperialism, then Tanaka is remiss in overlooking the function of Korea in a study that covers the period when the peninsula is annexed and made into Chōsen. By not dealing more extensively and conceptually with Korea's position in *Tōyōshi*, Tanaka makes the mistake that the

[12]A similar observation has been made by Robert Borgen and Gina L. Barnes in their 1996 review of *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 1: *Ancient Japan* (1993), edited by Delmer H. Brown.

very subjects of his study, Meiji historians, were careful to avoid—conflating *Tōyō* to China.

Given that Tanaka's primary subject of interest is the historical writings of Shiratori Kurakichi, his oversight of Korea is especially puzzling. As Japanese historians such as Hatada Takashi long ago argued, *Tōyōshi* was begun by the likes of Shiratori with studies on Korea, not China (1969). In the 1880s and 1890s, when the institutions and journals supporting *Tōyōshi* were first set up, it was Korea—the "Chōsen mondai"—that often dominated Japanese newspaper headlines. Historical scholarship followed. Indeed, Hatada points out that even prior to the rise of *Tōyōshi*, the earliest Japanese national histories written in the Meiji period grappled with the problems of Korea's position in that history. Scholars such as ShigenoYasutsugu, Kume Kunitake, and Hoshino Hisashi, building on the traditions of the Edo period nativist school and using Japanese historical records, elaborated myths about the early Japanese conquest of Korea: that the Japanese deity Susano-ō had ruled Korea, that the brother of Jimmu had become king of Silla, and that Empress Jingū had forced the Silla king to submit to her rule. As formulated in influential works such as *Kokushi gan*, these images of ancient Korea exalted the early Japanese state and elevated the imperial line. Thus, historical representations of Korea were from the earliest moments in modern Japanese historiography significant for elaborating the myths that were to become so central to the imperial system and Japanese national history (Hatada 1969, 231–40).

These early writings on Korea, based largely on Japanese sources, became the basis by the 1890s of a new field of Korean history, ensconced in the newly formed departments of *Tōyōshi*. Scholars began to move beyond Japanese historical sources to examine what Korean sources had to say about the islands as well as the peninsula. In addition to comprehensive works such as Hayashi Taisuke's "Chōsenshi," the early issues of the *Shigaku zasshi* (Journal of Historical Studies) featured many articles concerning Korea. It was these studies, Hatada asserts, that provided the starting point for the development of the field of *Tōyōshi* (1969, 231–40). Shiratori was a leading player in these developments. Between 1904 and 1906 he published seven different articles on Korean history, many dealing with philological issues surrounding Korean place names and titles, and began a manuscript of a comprehensive history of Korea, one which he never published. Many of his early pieces on ancient Japan were explicitly comparative with Korea (Shiratori 1969, vol.1). Over the remaining years of the Meiji period, Shiratori published more than a dozen other articles on Korea and continued to return to this subject during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods (Shiratori 1969, vol.3).

But most significant for the question of the relationship between historical knowledge and imperialism, these versions of the ancient past moved beyond academe into the larger public sphere. Shiratori himself published historical articles with strong political overtones in the mainstream press (1910). In short, the versions of Korean history offered by many Meiji historians, by providing precedents of an earlier, more exalted time when Japan supposedly ruled the peninsula, offered a direct and specific rationalization for the reassertion of Japanese control—and in the early years of the twentieth century, reassertion of a supposed ancient domination meant a very modern form of colonial rule.

In these many ways, Tanaka has overlooked an important facet of the writing of the very historians he makes the center of his study. For historians like Shiratori, writings on Korea played a crucial function in the use of history for the articulation of a modern Japanese identity by assuming a prominent place in both the development

of a new national history and the field of *Tōyōshi*. This is not to suggest that Korea superseded China in importance. Far from it. Yet it is to propose that when considering the large and complex field of *Tōyōshi*, Korea cannot be left out.

If Tanaka's work, despite its neglect of the Korean dimension, has nevertheless been helpful in drawing attention to the function of Asia in the ideological environment, then the more recent work of Louise Young has served to highlight the penetrating power of the colonial experience in many other sectors of modern Japan. Her *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (1998) is the first English-language monograph expressly aimed at tracing the penetrating forces of empire on the Japanese population remaining in the home islands. As Young explains, her expression "total empire" is an analogue for total war, since "like total war, total empire was made on the home front": it touched "the lives of most Japanese in the 1930s in one way or another" (13). By narrowing the gap between internal and external history, Young demonstrates how in numerous areas the domestic history of modern Japan cannot be recounted to the exclusion of empire.

Her vantage point is that of the social history of culture, as she explores the popular forces unleashed by the military engagements in northeast China that "led to the formation of new linkages between empire, state and society" (1998, 180). The popular culture of the 1930s, Young shows, was deeply embedded in empire. Publishers were able to recover from the depression that hit in 1929 only by appealing to what Young refers to as the "war fever" of the period with arresting new book titles such as "The Unswervingly Loyal Three Human Bombs" (70–71). Musical tastes shifted after 1931, away from "languorous jazz rhythms" to war songs with stirring titles such as "Attack Plane" (72). The campaigns on the continent offered newspaper organizations a chance to expand into the relatively untapped rural markets, as farmers sought news of the combat experiences of local troops (59–61). Competition among different newspapers for coverage became a key factor in technological developments in the production and reporting processes (62–63). Young shows how "through appeals to patriotism and defense of empire" (162), women and labor groups took the lead in mobilizing non-elite groups for the purpose of both empire and their own organizational interests. In a field that has been slow to examine the home front implications of empire, Young gives us over four hundred pages of detailed descriptions about experiences of empire without even leaving the islands.

The focus of *Japan's Total Empire* is Manchukuo, the "crown" in the colonial holdings. In choosing Manchukuo as the focus of her study, Young shares Peattie's emphasis on 1931. But Young does make a nod in the direction of the early colonies, suggesting on a number of occasions that it all started with Korea. She writes about the origins of this total empire that "only Korea in the 1890s and early 1900s ever involved domestic society to a degree that approached my sense of total" (1998, 14). Her analysis of various features of colonial rule in Manchuria bears this out. In areas as diverse as colonial vocabulary (97–99), the advent of "state and quasi-state enterprises" as a basis for colonial expansion (201), racial discourse (363–64), the linkage of colonialism with notions of 'civilization' (433), as well as policies on Japanese emigration out to the empire (316–17), patterns were initially established in Korea and it was from Korea that forces of empire first came to be felt by the home population. This point about the seminal position of the Korean colonial experience can also be observed in two other works, one quite old and a second of more recent vintage.

One of the earliest books to be written on Japanese imperialism in English, Hilary Conroy's *The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868–1910* (1960), gives a sense of the intensity

of the interactions between Japan and Korea in the political arena. Not expressly designed to draw out the domestic experiences of imperialism, Conroy's work used the peninsula as a case study to examine a thesis, derived from political theories on the conduct of states in the international realm, that contrasted the effects of "realism" versus "idealism" on foreign policy decision making. Few students of Japanese history have taken up this thesis, but Conroy's careful attention to the raging debates about Korea among Japanese political elites and in the popular press shows how prominent the "Chōsen mondai" was in Meiji Japan. Prime Minister Sanjō Sanetomi understood this significance only too well, for, as Conroy suggests, his anxiety over the "Conquest of Korea" debates (*seikanron*) was at least partially to explain for a rupture in a blood vessel in his brain. Clearly, Korea was no small worry (19). In examining annexation as a case study of decision making, Conroy was less interested in the question of the role of empire in Japan per se than in problems of foreign policy formulation. As a result, the perspective of the book is not unexpectedly looking outwards from Tokyo to Korea. Yet the evidence he wields so colorfully is quite telling of the prominence of the "Chōsen mondai": the public uproar over the assassination of the would-be Korean revolutionary, Kim Okkyun, at the hands of a Korean government agent and the resultant successful non-confidence motion against Itō Hirobumi's cabinet (222–28); the arrest of Ōi Kentaro and his associates for possessing bombs and carrying out robberies to raise funds for an attempted coup against the Korean government (362–66); the astounding assassination of Queen Min on the Seoul palace grounds led by the Japanese legation minister Miura Gorō, and the subsequent dismissal of charges in a very public trial (310–23); and, the celebration of annexation by a press quick to print commemorative editions accompanied by overzealous editors penning pieces with such memorable titles as "The Happiness of the World" (388–90). All these examples and many more reveal how events relating to Japan's closest neighbor were interwoven into the political and ideological consciousness of an increasingly literate and politically astute Meiji public.

The Problems with Empire

For more than thirty years *Japan's Seizure of Korea* remained the only extensive English language study of Japanese relations with Korea during the Meiji period. In 1995, however, Peter Duus added to these scarce offerings with his much-awaited study, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895–1910*. For Duus, Japanese imperialism in the peninsula was the "product of a complex coalition uniting the Meiji leaders, backed and prodded by a chorus of domestic politicians, journalists, businessmen, and military leaders with a subimperialist Japanese community in Korea" (23). Seeking to trace the economic and political means by which control over the peninsula was asserted, Duus provides a wide-ranging treatment of the processes that led Japanese leaders to annex the peninsula. But if this book is about how Japan "penetrated" Korea, as Duus asserts in his subtitle, so too does it indirectly show how colonial Korea deeply "penetrated" the social, economic, and political life of Meiji Japan.

Duus is at his best in the political history of colonial conquest, where he shows how the "Chōsen mondai" reached the top of the agenda for the mandarins of the foreign policy establishment. The peninsula was perceived not only as the paramount security risk—the infamous "dagger pointing at the heart of Japan"—but also as a

means of proving to Western imperialists through its successful colonizing endeavors that Japan too belonged in the upper rank of civilized countries. In this section of the work he covers some of the same territory as Conroy, with some significant new additions and twists. But, more importantly, Duus sees imperialism as the outcome of more than just state endeavors. In tracing these non-state activities Duus breaks into new ground for English-language studies of the period, raising a number of important topics. His treatment of economic relations reiterates the significance of Korea for the Japanese economy, which by the time of annexation was already Japan's fourth-largest trade partner (1995, 262). Duus examines the issue of emigration to the peninsula, noting that Korea quickly emerged as home to the largest overseas Japanese community, numbering over 171,000 by 1910 (289). For these residents and the growing number of tourists, there was a growth in how-to guidebooks and travel guides with titles such as "How to make it in Korea with only 100 yen"(323). Government agencies and private organizations urged people to move to Korea, as one guidebook explained, for the "golden opportunity. Korea is a place where there are green hills everywhere; it is a place rich in resources; it is a place where there is freedom; this is our homeland (*waga kōkyō*)" (322).

Duus is fully aware of the dilemma presented by writing colonial history from the perspective of Tokyo, especially when Japanese records are the sole sources available to the historian. He is candid about this perspective: "I cannot read Korean," he acknowledges, divulging his dependency on sources created in the metropole by the bureaucrats, politicians, and public supporters of empire (1995, 25). In itself this is not necessarily a problem. Many historians of the various European empires, working critically with only the colonial archive, have produced much valuable research. And as *The Abacus and the Sword* itself shows, the abundant Japanese sources on the empire provide a myriad of perspectives from which to explore the colonial experience. Yet such a source base has its limits, limits for which Duus compensates by trying to restrict the scope of his inquiry to two areas. As he explains in the introduction, "the purpose" of *The Abacus and the Sword*, "is the reconstruction of a mental world, not a material one" (24). Secondly, due to his dependence on Japanese sources, Duus classifies the book as belonging to Japanese history: it is "Japanese history rather than Korean history, or even Japanese-Korean history, if one can imagine such a thing" (25). Thus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, as defined in its opening pages, purports to be a book about Japanese images and perceptions of the peninsula. It is a book, Duus explains, which will "more often reflect the perspective of the traveler from Tokyo than the visitor from Ŭiju" (25).

The possibilities offered by this approach are most evident in the eleventh and final chapter, entitled "Defining the Koreans." Here Duus examines the derogatory and racist representations of Koreans and their culture—representations that Duus argues supported and rationalized the annexation of the peninsula. Questions of race, theories of history, and prejudiced stereotypes of local people are discussed. Delving into previously unused materials such as travel accounts and newspapers, Duus shows how negative images could be wielded to propose that Korean backwardness could only be overcome with Japanese guidance and that racial arguments stressing commonality could be employed to call for "reunion" with Japan, as though Korea were an estranged family member. Whichever mode of representation was undertaken, both served inevitably to justify annexation.

These are important points, which show the power of what Duus has called the "mental world." Unfortunately, however, Duus does not follow his line of inquiry to its logical end. Duus neglects to consider how his notion of the colonial "mental

world" reached far beyond the clumsy racial and cultural stereotypes of the public media, since it was this same "mental world" that produced the very primary sources that Duus relies upon to write the rest of his book. The hackneyed images of Koreans were the most blatant manifestations of colonial discourse and today are the most jarring to our retrospective eyes. But just as important, if not more so, are the ways colonial discourse molded the other types of documents and records that enable Duus, nearly one hundred years later, to discuss the diverse topics that make *The Abacus and the Sword* such compelling reading. Despite the professed goal of focusing on the mental world, Duus never questions the relationship between this "mental world" and his own use of colonial documents to explore issues such as Japan's currency policy in the peninsula, the politics of the protectorate, Japanese settler communities, and agricultural policy. Because this methodological quandary is never broached, Duus on some important occasions fails to maintain a critical approach to his sources, leading him to accept claims made about Korean society and politics as unproblematic truths. This creates difficulties, for despite the two self-imposed limitations of the study, Duus at key points moves beyond his definition of the "mental world" of Japanese colonialists and into what he calls the "material world" of the Korean peninsula—and it is precisely in these areas that he encounters trouble.

This trouble is evident in one of the key arguments of *The Abacus and the Sword* concerning the role of Korean collaborators in the annexation of the peninsula. Like Conroy before him, Duus seeks to debunk conspiracy theories about Japanese intentions towards Korea, arguing on the basis of cabinet documents that annexation was not a policy determined at the beginning of the Meiji period, then pursued relentlessly until finally achieved in 1910. As both authors argue, domination of the peninsula was certainly an objective common to most Japanese policymakers, but they were divided on how best to achieve that goal. For Duus, then, the line of inquiry is not how an early ambition to colonize was realized, but rather when and why the decision for annexation as the most suitable form of domination was made. Duus' ultimate answer to the "when?" question was a May 1904 cabinet decision; the solution to the "why annexation?" question centers on Korean collaborators or, in Duus' opinion, the lack thereof. According to Duus, Itō Hirobumi had been keen to find an arrangement whereby a pliable group of Koreans could be placed in power to protect Japanese interests. But Duus concludes that Itō "overestimated the intrinsic appeal of 'civilization' to the Korean populace" (1995, 241). This is a revealing statement. It is not presented as Itō's perception or as Japanese representations of conditions in the peninsula. Rather, it is a point made by Duus and is just one of the more obvious examples of how he allows colonial rhetoric to insinuate itself into his own authorial voice. At no point does he consider how his conclusion resonates with early-twentieth-century Japanese claims about the low level of Korean civilization—a strategy which, as in other colonial settings, was wielded to justify empire.

This problem is more than just a question of the inappropriate use of colonial rhetoric, for Duus' evaluation of the appeal of civilization to Koreans is the key assumption underlying his argument about collaboration. As he states on more than one occasion, "Had the anxieties of the Meiji leadership been allayed by the emergence of a strong actively modernizing elite willing to turn to Japan for help, perhaps the annexation of Korea might never have taken place" (1995, 425).[13] In this statement, as with his comment about the "appeal of civilization," Duus again violates the limits of his study as outlined in his introduction. He moves beyond the "mental world" of

[13]See also a similar statement on page 241.

Japanese colonialists and delves into the "material world" of the Korean peninsula—here to make a claim about the absence of modernizing Korean elites, a claim with strong links to his earlier assertion about the lack of appeal of civilization to the Korean populace. That Japanese decision makers believed there were no such groups is clear from Duus' discussion. Duus runs into trouble when he attempts to equate these Japanese perceptions with actual conditions on the peninsula—conditions to which Duus has access only through those very same documents which reflect the biases of Japanese decision-makers. He employs the same colonial documents for reconstructing *both* the mental and material. There is a definite circularity to this approach: Duus' treatment of Japanese perceptions about Korea are regularly confirmed by Duus' objective statements about conditions in the peninsula, but these objective statements are themselves derived by Duus from those sources that are a product of this problematic "colonial mind." In the case of collaboration, what were Japanese colonial judgements about Korean political circumstances—no actively reforming forces—are unquestioningly presented now not simply as "the perspective of the traveler from Tokyo" but as a historical fact.

That Japanese officials who in the end made the decision to annex Korea would perceive conditions in the peninsula as necessitating annexation is, ultimately, not in the least surprising. But that their perceptions of the situation on the Korean peninsula would be uncritically accepted and reproduced almost ninety years later as objective accounts of conditions on the peninsula *is* surprising. In terms of approach, this would be akin to asking the same questions—why annexation? And what was the role of collaborators?—of those documents that Duus leaves out of his study, Korean nationalist sources. The answer from these sources would be precisely the opposite: *too many* collaborators accounted for annexation.[14] Although this answer is useful for the intellectual history of the Korean nationalist movement, the approach gives a skewed perspective to the posed question and is as unsatisfying as the solution offered in *The Abacus and the Sword*.

The treatment of the central issue of collaboration is just one of the many ways *The Abacus and the Sword* oversimplifies the political situation in Korea during these years. While Duus sets himself the task of unraveling the complicated coalition of interests in Japan that supported the imperialist project in the peninsula—a task that he admirably fulfills—he neglects to give similar attention to the equally variegated spectrum of political groups in Korea. His assertion that he is dealing with Japanese history and the "mental world" would appear to excuse him from this task, but in fact as his treatment of collaboration shows, key arguments in *The Abacus and the Sword* frequently depend on assumptions made about conditions in the Korean peninsula. His argument on collaboration and reforming forces centers almost exclusively on the vicissitudes of the political office holders in the capital—again, a focus derived from sources written by colonial administrators in search of Korean allies to protect and expand their interests. Missing from this story are the influential and far more numerous individuals engaged in reform efforts outside of the state and often beyond the capital, largely in educational and newspaper activities. Newspaper readers and writers were important not just in Japan, as *The Abacus and the Sword* would seem to suggest, but in Korea as well—especially if Duus insists on engaging in evaluations of the level of civilization of the Korean populace. For many Korean reformers,

[14]For such nationalist interpretations, see the editorials of the San Francisco-based Korean newspaper, *Kongnip sinmun*.

"civilization," to use Duus' own phrase, was indeed "intrinsically appealing" and, due to Japan's presence, they devoted, sometimes literally, their lives to it.

However, pursuing "civilization" through a reform program was tricky business in the late years of the Chosŏn dynasty. Like elites in other colonial or semicolonial settings, would-be Korean reformers were put into a delicate situation vis à vis external powers that were themselves seeking to encourage changes that would support their own vision of progress and, most importantly, their own material and political interests. A wide variety of strategies was undertaken by different Korean groups and individuals to deal with this situation, but the nuances of these various positions are wholly lacking in *The Abacus and the Sword*. Implicit in Duus' account of collaboration is the notion that all Koreans interested in "civilizing" reform would naturally ally themselves with Japan, an assumption all too reminiscent of contemporary Japanese colonial discourse and again reflective of the sources upon which the work is based. In actuality, the relationship that Korean elites interested in pursuing reform sought to forge with Japan was not reducible to a simple dichotomy of "collaboration" or "resistance." A spectrum of strategies was available and the positions of individuals or groups frequently shifted over time in relation to the changing signals arriving out of Tokyo, different segments of the nationalist movement, or even the Korean countryside. It is this fluidity and variation indicative of autonomous Korean activity that is entirely missing from *The Abacus and the Sword*.

This reductive approach to domestic Korean issues can be seen in the case, cited in passing by Duus (1995, 195), of Chang Chiyŏn, a leading newspaper writer, who penned a famous editorial against the Japanese imposition of protectorate status on Korea in 1905 (for an English translation, see Lee 1996, 422–23). For Duus, Chang represents a case of outright resistance, but in fact Chang's career as editor of the longest standing daily of the time, the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* (*Capital Gazette*), shows how resistance and collaboration were not an either-or dilemma. Like many writers throughout East Asia, Chang had been impressed with the achievements of Japan, interpreting his neighbor's success at reform as proof of the veracity of a kaleidoscope of theories including notions of civilization, Social Darwinism, and nationalism. Latching on to Pan-Asian theories current at the time, Chang promoted reform as a way of strengthening Korea as part of a tripartite alliance of the nations of East Asia. The peace of East Asia and the sovereignty of Korea, he asserted in his editorials, depended on working together with Japan and China. Because of its greater strength, Japan, he admitted, would necessarily assume the role of leader in the alliance. Chang went so far as to publish an editorial during the Russo-Japanese War wistfully imagining a joint force of Japan, Korea, and China expelling Russia from Asia (20 February 1904). So convinced was he of the importance of this alliance for Korean independence that the following month Chang welcomed Itō Hirobumi to Korea and urged Korean officials to cooperate with him. " We must together follow the principle of crossing the river in the same boat," he editorialized, "and vigorously pursue the task of renewal (*yusin*)" (19 March).

Eight months later Chang sat in a Japanese jail. Japan had just announced its protectorate over the peninsula, effectively stripping Korea of its independence. Chang had responded with his famous editorial, distributed free of cost to avoid the Japanese censors, in which he denounced the protectorate and accused the Japanese of betraying Korean trust. Arrested, Chang spent the next three months in jail, no doubt wondering about the effect of his editorials urging his countrymen to work together with Japan. Even after the newspaper was resurrected, though no longer with Chang at the top of the masthead, the editors of the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* sought to establish a

middle ground. A strategy was pursued of criticizing not only those it referred to as the "flatterers and panderers" of Japan, but also of those it viewed as overtly anti-Japanese. Considerable effort was expended in editorials trying to debunk the many myths and rumors that, it noted, had grown around the Japanese presence in the country (3 November 1905 and 15 April 1907). But as Duus demonstrates, Japanese policy became increasingly aggressive. With the tighter restrictions on publications in 1907, the *Hwangsŏng sinmun*'s editorial policy became less tenable. When Duus cites Chang's famous editorial as a case of "resistance," he does so without contextualizing the piece within either the evolving editorial policy of this influential newspaper or the shifting impact on the Korean domestic political scene of the changing Japanese policy that his own study traces. The impact of an evolving and ever harsher Japanese policy on the political position of leading Korean figures is never addressed and no place is allowed in his narratives for those Koreans, like Chang, interested in productively engaging with Japan in pursuit of "civilizing" reforms without abandoning their desire for a fully sovereign nation. Instead, the *The Abacus and the Sword*, adopting a mode of analysis from contemporary Japanese policymakers eager to slate Koreans almost solely according to their reaction to Japanese policy, tends to judge Koreans as either potential collaborators or resistors. This divides the Korean spectrum into two extremes and misses the dynamic political alignments that Japan was certainly influencing but that cannot be simplistically reduced to either pro-Japanese or anti-Japanese characterizations.

The Abacus and the Sword has increased our understanding of the Japanese-Korean relationship at the turn of the century more than any other recent English-language book. Yet just as Duus adds to our knowledge of this understudied and under-appreciated subject, so too does his work forewarn us of some of the dilemma of writing colonial history. Duus' rich work opens many new avenues for future research, but without further exploring what he calls the "mental world" so as to understand the full power and reach of colonial discourse, it will be difficult for future studies to avoid the same quandaries that ultimately raise reservations about the conclusions of *The Abacus and the Sword*.

Rewriting Colonial History

To this end, more research on the formation of the complex ideologies that enabled the construction and maintenance of the empire is needed. The potential for such studies is immense, especially given the enormous quantities of documents produced by the colonial bureaucracies and the Japanese resident communities.[15] Official sources are becoming increasingly available in published collections.[16] Ranging from economic bulletins to police arrest reports to anthropological studies of Korean customs, they offer means to move beyond the institutional and policy emphasis of studies on empire and to examine the wider production of colonial knowledge on Korea.

[15]One count of Japanese newspapers in the peninsula lists more than thirty in just under twenty cities between 1881–1910 alone (Yi Hae'chang 279–319). For a study of one of these newspapers, see Altman 1984.

[16]Many of these are being republished in multivolume form by Korean publishing houses and are listed in American libraries under their Korean titles.

Some work has begun in this direction. Alexis Dudden has conducted a study of the translation, adaptation, and uses of the conceptual vocabulary of international law to show how its deployment eased the way for the Meiji state to establish control over Korea and legitimize the annexation as "legal" in the eyes of the international community (1998). For Dudden, this is not just a question of legal history—what legislation was passed when and by whom?—but rather one of how the transhistorical claims of international law could be used by one sovereign nation, Japan, "to define certain people unfit to rule themselves" (13). Seeing international law as something that must be performed, she shows how Korea served as the stage on which the Japanese state could exert a "legal" control of the population under the gaze of the Western powers and thereby present itself as "civilized." Attempts by Koreans in these years to contest these "legal terms," Dudden argues, served to reinforce the power of legal discourse to determine the fate of the peninsula. Such an approach extricates her study from debates on whether annexation was legal or not, showing how the mastery of one specific field of discourse functioned to give Japan the consenting nod of the powers to control the peninsula.[17] The relevance of this work to the current question of Japanese apologies for the colonial period and the attempt by the Japanese government to escape claims for compensation on the basis of the "legality" of annexation is clear.

Other work has begun to examine imperial ideology on the home front in areas that earlier were not generally seen as having being relevant to the colonial enterprise. Kim Brandt has brought the empire quite literally back home through her examination of the Korean colonial origins of what today is often considered one of the key repositories of Japanese identity, arts and crafts (*mingei*). Brandt examines how leading proponents of Japanese *mingei*, in particular Yanagi Soetsu, broadened their "horizons in tandem with those of the Japanese empire" (1996, 29). The movement began with their discovery of the white ware ceramics of the Choson dynasty. This initial exultation in the beauty of Korean objects, Brandt shows, was nevertheless based on derogatory stereotypes, for the Korean "lack of civilization" was itself an advantage when it came to pottery. Untouched by "civilization," Korean potters were believed to be able to create a truer, more natural handiwork no longer within the reach of Japanese craftsmen, who had been tainted by modernity. Thus, while individual Korean art objects could be celebrated, the celebration itself became one more realm in which the ideologies of empire were further articulated. Moreover, Brandt shows that the aesthetic principles refined vis à vis Korean objects were imported back to Japan, such that the discourse on Korean objects "shaped future encounters by Japanese with other cultures and their artifacts, whether these were located within national borders or without" (71). By the mid-1920s, this represented a "return of his [Yanagi's] interest to Japan, not from the conventional modern Japanese locus of estrangement from the native—the West—but from Korea" (78). What began as the collecting activity of a group of young aficionados made possible by the annexation of Korea had emerged by the late 1920s as an important way of rethinking modern notions of Japaneseness.

In Japan and Korea, a small number of studies have recently emerged which have begun to pose more wide-ranging questions about the place of empire in their respective histories of the nation. In Korean, Ch'oe Sogyŏng has examined Governor General-sponsored investigations of Korean customs, in particular studies on

[17]For the argument that the annexation treaty was illegal, see the special feature edited by Yi Kibaek 1996.

shamanism (1997). Focusing on the work of Murayama Chijun, who in the 1920s conducted several surveys of shamanistic practices and beliefs, Ch'oe investigates the emphasis placed on cultural investigations as a basis of attaining the type of evidence necessary to support the ideological pretensions of cultural assimilation and, in turn, enabling a tighter, more effective rule (ch. 2). Key for fostering the growth of Shinto in the colony, such studies promoted shamanism as an indigenous belief system for the first time, if only to draw attention to those areas that could be made appear similar to Shinto. Common roots could thus be claimed, while shamanism could still be presented as backward and in need of improvement through associations with Shintoism. Ch'oe draws out the irony of this enterprise, explaining how Korean nationalists later began to celebrate shamanism, but often by building on the same assumptions that animated the work of colonial investigators (210–42). One consequence of this colonial endeavor was a broadened interpretation of Shintoism, as those aspects of the state-sponsored belief system that could be equated with shamanism received greater emphasis and attention in its colonial versions.

In Japanese, Oguma Eiji in a lengthy work has explored what he calls "The Boundaries of the Japanese" as they were defined vis à vis the colonies (1998). Most significantly, Oguma raises the issue of internal colonialism by tracing the colonizing process back to the attempts to make the Ryukyu islanders and the Ainu people into "Japanese." With this very different chronology of empire, Oguma is able to link those processes that are so often retrospectively seen as part of internal nation building to the later quest for an overseas empire. As he shows by exploring the uses of civilizing discourse, education policy, the contradictions in assimilation efforts, and various debates among the colonizers, it was through these engagements that various ways of thinking about Japan itself were articulated. The work is ambitiously empirical, offering one of the most exhaustive single-volume accounts available in any language of the twists and turns of colonial policies and the individuals involved, but ultimately Oguma's efforts demonstrate how coming to terms with their endeavors in the colonies forced Japanese policymakers and intellectuals to reconsider some of the fundamental assumptions about Japanese identity.

Such conclusions are beginning to demonstrate the centrality of Korea and the broader colonial realm to Japanese experiences of modernity. They are showing that previous histories, by preserving the bounds of nation-centered history and not taking into account the transnational forces both unleashed by and enabling colonialism, have glossed over a crucial part of the history of modern Japan.

The integration of the colonies into the narrative of modern Japan does pose a number of hazards, however. It must be remembered that history offered some very specific ideological justifications for the attempts to assimilate Koreans as loyal imperial subjects under the infamous banner of *nissen ittai*, "Japan and Korea as a single body." By writing pieces that sought to erase any sense of Korean historical subjectivity, historians could argue that a historical basis existed for treating the peninsula as little more than an extension of Japan. Today, if the colonial experience is to be written back into the main narrative of modern Japan, there is a risk that the acquisition of empire will be seen merely as a process of territorial aggrandizement, where the agency of the colonial populations will again be lost and, like in earlier Japanese historical works, the colonies will be objectified as little more than the stomping grounds of Japanese colonizers.

This point would seem to be obvious. Yet in a recent study on European colonial history, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler have found it necessary to remark that colonies were not "empty spaces" to be transformed in the image of the metropole or

"fashioned in its interests" (1997, 1). In short, colonial subjects were not merely a backdrop to the story of the formation, development, and governance of Chōsen. It was not a Japanese enterprise alone. Attention to the mutual interactions between the islands and the peninsula—engagements that cannot be comprehended solely as "reactions" to "impacts"—offers a way of avoiding the problems rooted in the metropolitan perspective that has so dominated the study of the Japanese empire. Although this means a more challenging bilingual enterprise, a focus on these interactions has the added advantage of blurring the line so easily drawn between colonizer and colonized, between a monolithic external power and the colonized seen as either resistors or collaborators. These easy divisions, vital to the political struggle of these years, have generally underlain colonial history, be it written by historians of Japan or Korea. Yet in so thoroughly dominating historical approaches to the period, they have tended to obscure the many other types of interactions that enabled such a powerful Japanese colonialism. In the end, only a transnational history can capture the tremendous variety of transnational forces at play, forces that are not always so easily identifiable as explicitly Japanese or Korean but which have often been excluded from our nation-centered histories, despite their centrality to the formation of the nation. As the depth and fluidity of colonial engagements is taken into account, such hard boundaries between colonizer and colonized can be more frequently and productively crossed, providing a more complex history of both empire and nation.

Such a history, I would like to suggest, is more than just a deeper empirical effort to gain a keener insight on a wider realm of activities. Just as importantly, any integration of the colonial experience into modern Japanese history necessarily raises questions about why our histories have been so doggedly observant of the bounds of the nation. Such an approach forces us to consider how our histories of Japan have grown out of some of the same assumptions about the relationship between nation, empire, and history that at the beginning of the century informed a style of history that has been criticized in many quarters as nationalist but that must now also be acknowledged as colonialist. Needless to say, because these questions are associated with how Japan's relations with its Asian colonies are remembered today, these are especially sensitive issues that require much more research and will likely elicit heated comment, even rancorous debate. Yet a move away from the "island history" of the past to a more diverse history that integrates relations with Korea and other colonies into the main narrative of Japanese modernity offers a valuable means of reexamining some of the unquestioned parameters of Japanese history.

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