Cartoon and Massacre

Japanese Empire in China, Korea, and Taiwan

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Abstract. This paper examines the controversial legacy of the Japanese empire in East Asia using cartoons from *Tokyo Puck* and articles from *The Japan Times and Mail* to trace and analyze the development of Japanese imperialism in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. It attempts to connect historical events like the Sino-Japanese War, the Nanjing Massacre, and the colonization of Taiwan with modern day issues like the Yasukuni Shrine and Asian comfort women. The paper argues that Japanese imperialism in East Asia is complex and cannot be viewed through black and white lens; while often characterized by brutality and exploitation, Japan also brought development, the prime example being the island of Taiwan. The paper then posits several reasons why modern day Japan has yet to come to terms with its imperial past and makes policy suggestions for the future.

By the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the Meiji Reformation had succeeded in transforming Japan from a backward, closed country to a powerful, globally oriented hegemon. Railroads linked the Japanese countryside to major cities, while ports exported silks and imported machinery to build up domestic industries. Just as Japan emulated the West to modernize its economy and government, it also adopted the lessons of Western imperialism against its Asian neighbors. This essay examines the controversial legacy of the Japanese empire in East Asia and its different approaches to colonization in Korea, China and Taiwan. Using cartoons from *Tokyo Puck* from 1911 to 1912, I analyze how these mass culture magazines portrayed Japan’s imperial ambition in China and Korea. In analyzing these images, I focus on giving the historical context of the cartoons and then discussing their implication for Japanese foreign policy in East Asia. I then examine articles from *The Japan Times and Mail* from Dec.13 to Dec. 19, 1937, a week when, in historian Andrew Gordon's words, “one of the worst massacres in a century of horrific acts of mass murder” was perpetrated in the Nationalist’s capital of Nanjing. Through the vantage point of the *JT&M*, I explore how the Japanese press did or did not portray the occupation of Nanjing, how this portrayal may have shaped Japanese public opinion, and relate my analysis to the broader context of Japan’s
domestic and foreign policy. The overall aim is to trace and analyze the development of Japanese imperialism and address its modern day implication on issues like the Yasukuni Shrine and comfort women. I hope to show that the narrative of Japanese imperialism in East Asia is complex, and while often characterized by brutality and exploitation, in some cases, it also brought development. This complexity meant that for most Chinese and Koreans, Japanese colonialism meant oppression, but for Taiwanese, a dialectic “love and hate” relationship enmeshed in delicate geo-political considerations exists.

The Rise of Japanese Imperialism

In the late 19th century, Japan was a feudal, backward country under the same political system that was established in the 1600 by the Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu who united Japan. ¹ The bakufu, the military government under the Tokugawa shogunate, resolved to preserve this social/political order by adopting a policy of selective isolationism from the outside world. The isolationism was selective in the sense that although the bakufu expelled almost all foreigners in 1637, they allowed Dutch traders to remain. Nevertheless, in 1853, Japanese isolationism ended completely when US Commodore Perry, using gun-boat diplomacy, sailed into Yokohama harbor with his black ships and forced Japan open. Four years later, the West coerced Japan into signing the Ansei or “Unequal” Treaty whereby it compromised its sovereignty and territory.²

With Japan at the mercy of Western powers, many daimyo, Japanese feudal warlords, blamed the nation’s impotency on the bakufu and used the emperor as a rallying point for revolution. Defeating the bakufu in the Meiji Restoration, Japan’s new

² Gordon, 50.
leaders recognized that Japan could not afford to isolate itself from the West but must reform itself along Western line. The country’s new priority can be summed up in this letter to US President Grant from the Japanese emperor who declared, “Japan is resolved to stand upon an equal footing with the most enlightened nations.”\(^3\)

The most enlightened nations were Western nations. To accomplish this feat, Japan would have to industrialize, reform its society and strengthen its military. The Meiji government hired foreign experts and advisors from abroad and sent Japanese students to study overseas. Japanese leaders went abroad themselves in the important Iwakura Mission where they observe first-hand the marvels of Western civilization. They came back more determined to transform and modernize their homeland. These reformers eliminated the status system, made elementary education compulsory, allowed Japanese peasants to be conscripted into the army, and reformed the legal and tax code. They modeled Japan’s navy after the British and their army after Prussia.\(^4\) Foreign capital from the silk trade and the spirit of entrepreneurship among men like Shibusawa Eiichi powered the modernization and industrialization of Japan.\(^5\) After Japan’s surprise victory in the Russo-Japanese War, the West and indeed, its neighbors, especially China and Korea, had no choice but to take notice of Japan as a rising imperial power.

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China and Korea

The origin of Japanese imperialism can be trace as far back as 1590, when the Japanese imperial court claimed Japan as the center of the universe challenging similar claims by China. Japan validated this by inviting foreign delegations from “barbarian kingdoms” from Korea and smaller islands to the south of Japan to offer tribute to the Japanese emperor. Incidentally, Korea also gave tribute to China. The contest between Japan and China for influence in Korea would be played out late into the 19th century.

In the 1870s, Saigo Takamori, a hawkish Meiji leader from Satsuma, pushed the Japanese government to send an invasion force to Korea. In an act that infuriated Takamori, the Korean King had earlier rejected an emissary from the Meiji Emperor since the Korean government recognized only one Emperor, that of China. Moderate Japanese leaders who wanted to focus resources on modernizing Japan rather than fighting a costly foreign war managed to temporarily derail Takamori’s plan. Nevertheless, in 1876, following the example of US Commodore Perry, Japan used gunboat diplomacy to force Korea to sign the “Unequal” Treaty of Kanghwa. The Treaty opened three Korean ports to trade and gave Japan extraterritorial jurisdiction in Korea.6

In the 1880s, Japan pushed for more influence in Korea to supersede Korea’s intimate and dependent relationship with China. The ultimate aim according to one Meiji leader, Yamagata Aritomo, was to turn Korea into a “zone of advantage” protecting Japan’s “zone of sovereignty.” To realize this ambition, Meiji leaders imposed military advisors onto the Korean king. In 1882, anti-foreign Korean insurgents rose up and overthrew King Kojong of Korea killing his Japanese advisors. The furious Japanese government responded by coercing the new Korean government into paying an indemnity

6 Gordon, 15.
and accepting the permanent placement of Japanese troops in Seoul. China, who felt its influence threatened, condemned Japan’s acts.

In 1884, Japan and China ran into conflict again over a failed coup led by Kim Ok-kyun. Kim, who wanted to promote nationalism and reform Korea along Japanese line, had the secret support of the Japanese government to revolt. However, two thousand Chinese troops intervened to put down the coup. Afterward, crowds of Korean, angry at Japan’s role failed plot, killed 40 Japanese nationals. Japanese political parties and press responded by calling for revenge on China and Korea. Nevertheless, was temporarily averted by the 1885 Li-Ito Pact between China and Japan where both sides agreed to withdraw troops from Korea.\(^7\)

This fragile peace collapsed during the Korean Tonghak rebellion when China and Japan again confronted each other as they mutually intervened in Korea. By the spring of 1894, the Korean government, under siege by rebels, asked China to send troops. Japan, on the pretext of protecting its nationals in Seoul, also sent 8,000 troops. The Japanese military buildup by this time gave them the confidence to demand an equal voice with China in administering Korea’s internal affair. When China resisted, Japanese troops seized the Korean royal palace, and Japan declared war on China.\(^8\)

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 consisted mainly of naval engagements that displayed Japan’s new military strength and exposed the decadence of the Qing dynasty that ruled China.\(^9\) Only a decade earlier, China had a stronger navy than Japan, but mismanagement by the Qing government, including the reallocation of naval military fund to rebuild Empress Cixi’s summer palace, came to haunt the Chinese government.

\(^7\) Gordon, 17.

\(^8\) Gordon, 20.

The war ended disastrously for China with the signing of the Shimonoseki Treaty. Not only did China lose control of Korea, but it had to relinquish Taiwan, the Liaodong peninsula and railroad building rights in southern Manchuria. In addition, China was forced to pay an enormous indemnity of 360 million yen, a sum four and half times the annual national budget of the Japanese government at the time.\textsuperscript{10}

The first image we examine from \textit{Tokyo Puck} was published fifteen years after these Sino-Japanese War. The magazine published the cartoon on September 20, 1910 in issue 27.\textsuperscript{11} It shows a helpless woman in white garment being lifted by a strong bare-chested man who lowers her into a bucket of red dye. The woman represents Korea and the white garment she wears is Korea’s national color. Her clothes is a blank slate that could be patterned in any number of ways—Chinese, Russian, British, German or French—but Japan, the burly man, had gained the power to dye her in the color of the rising sun. The cartoon testifies to Japan’s imperialistic ambition in Korea. By 1907, Japan had forced the abdication of the Korean king and the disbanding of the Korean national army, which paved the way in 1910 for the formal annexation of Korea. The depiction of Korea as a helpless woman, taken in context to the submissive role that women are expected to play in Japan’s patriarchal society at the time, further emphasize the power disparity between Korea and Japan. In contrast, the muscular Japanese man represents Japan’s strength and national confidence. Not only did it defeat China in the Sino-Japanese War, but in 1905, Japan became the first Asian country to defeat a Western nation in the Russo-Japanese War. Successfully consolidating its strength

\textsuperscript{10} Gordon, 118.

\textsuperscript{11} See Image 1 in appendix.
internally through the Meiji reformation, Japan was able to project its power externally. Japan’s increasing influence brought it into competition with the West.

The second cartoon demonstrates this as the Japanese press takes a snide view on US backing for China in a diplomatic row with Mexico. The image dates to May 10, 1911 and the caption reads, “China demands satisfaction from Mexico. Bravo for her. It is to be hoped that she will not have to pay high for somebody’s backing.”

The depiction of China as a large-teethed buffoon in Chinese traditional costumes serves as an example of the dehumanization and degradation of Chinese people by the Japanese press, an ironic act in that so much of Japanese culture had been borrowed from China, including its writing system. Still, Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese war and Japan’s view that it has become a civilized nation led to a desire to distinguish itself from inferior people who have yet to modernize. To dehumanize Chinese and show them as something less than human also justifies Japanese imperialism in that Japan now has a duty to civilize its less advanced neighbor. To paraphrase Rudyard Kipling, this responsibility mission was now the “[Japanese] man’s burden.”

The third cartoon also deals with Japan’s perception of China. It dates to Feb. 20, 1911. By this time, reformist-revolutionary forces in China had succeeded in forcing the Qing monarchy to abdicate. A new government under the leadership of Sun Yat-Sen and General Yuan Shikai set out to modernize China along Western lines. Like Meiji Japan, which ordered the cutting of the samurai topknots, the reformers in China abandoned the traditional luequis. This cartoon from Tokyo Puck, however, pokes fun at Chinese efforts to modernize. The caption reads, “If the Chinese luequis are to be cut off, they will miss

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12 See Image 2 in appendix.
13 See Image 3 in appendix.
some of its usefulness.” While the depiction of Chinese people is slightly more humanoid than in the previous image, Chinese are shown here to look clownish and child-like. They are depicted performing silly or idiotic acts with their luequis like spanking, jumping, and hanging clothes. The cartoon suggests that instead of welcoming China’s attempts to reform, Japan regarded China’s effort with skepticism and scorn. The image seems to say, look at what China has been up to for the last few centuries; how can they be prepared for modernity?

The final cartoon from *Tokyo Puck* dates to April 20, 1911 and deals with Japan’s competition with the West for influence in Manchuria. Earlier, this essay mentioned that when it lost the Sino-Japanese war, China agreed to give up railroads rights in Southern Manchuria and Liaodong Province to Japan. However, intervention by the Western powers (Russia, France, and Germany) forced Japan to return Liaodong Province to China in 1895. Japan has not forgotten this humiliation and mocked China for selling access and rights to Manchuria to the West. Japan’s resentment can be seen in this cartoon depicting the Chinese government as a butcher carving up the pork of Manchuria for the West. At the time, however, a weak China had little choice and could only hope to play the various powers against each other in order to salvage what little sovereignty she had left. As the Western powers became preoccupied in WWI, Japan invaded China to fill the power vacuum left in their wake. China, embroiled in its own civil war between the Nationalist and Communist barely resisted Japan’s seizure of southern Manchuria.

In 1931, Japan used the “Manchurian Incident” as a pretext to expand its holding in China. The Incident involved a plot by Japan’s Kwantung Army to fabricate the

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14 See Image 4 in appendix.
bombing of Japan’s railway and to blame it on Chinese Nationalist troops. Japan used the incident as a pretext to take over all of Manchuria, establishing the puppet state of Manchoukuo. In the coming decade, two main factions of Japanese policymakers would split on how to deal with Japan’s empire in China. The expansionists wanted to enlarge Japanese holdings further south while a minority faction, fearing a protracted war, wanted consolidation of the existing territory.\(^\text{15}\)

The Manchurian Incident set in motion a series of events that led eventually to the Nanjing Massacre. In 1933, a year after the Manchurian Incident, Japan expanded its control of China to the Great Wall of China and stationed its troops 40 miles from Beijing.\(^\text{16}\) The Nationalists responded weakly to Japanese aggression. Chiang Kai-shek adhered to a strategy of trading “space for time” in which he would ignore Japanese pressure in the North to focus his attention on eliminating the Red Army under Mao Tsetung. Chiang believed that by first destroying the enemy from within, China would be in a better position to confront the enemy from without.\(^\text{17}\) In accordance with this policy and to appease Japan, Chiang agreed to withdraw his troops from the Great Wall, Beijing, and Tiangjiang.\(^\text{18}\)

Nevertheless, the course of Chinese history changed dramatically following the Sian Incident. On Dec. 12, 1936, Chang Tsueliang, a Nationalist general from Manchuria who was sent to Sian to chase the Red Army by Chiang, kidnapped the generalissimo as he came to inspect the front. Chang demanded Chiang change policy and form a united front with Mao’s Red Army to fight the Japanese. The generalissimo, faced with the

\(^{15}\)Gordon, 204.
\(^{16}\)Gordon, 190.
\(^{18}\)Gordon, 190.
option of death or capitulation, agreed to Chang’s demand setting the stage for a full scale confrontation between China and Japan.\textsuperscript{19}

The Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 7, 1937 ignited the flames of war. Small skirmishes at the Marco Polo Bridge between Chinese and Japanese troops spiraled into full mobilizations. Within a month, Japanese forces swept south from Manchukuo and occupied Beijing and Tiangjiang. Building on their successes, the Japanese military extended their control to Shandong Province, Shanghai and by Mid-December they knocked on the door of Nanjing, the capital of the Republic of China. Responding to the gains made by Japan, Chiang Kai-shek made the strategic decision to evacuate his government further west into China’s interior so that he could continue a war of resistance.\textsuperscript{20} Nanjing fell but not without stiff resistance by the thousands of Chinese Nationalist troops defending the city that contained the tomb of Sun Yat-Sen, the father of modern China.

\textit{The Japan Time and Mail} reported on Dec. 13, 1937 on its front page that the Japanese military was on the “Final Leg of [the] Drive on Nanking from Land and Air.”\textsuperscript{21} The article mentioned the desperate fighting taking place around the city. However, it emphasized that China did most of the desperate fighting. The other headlines on the front page focused on the swift progress by Japanese forces and the futility of Chinese resistance.\textsuperscript{22} The newspaper, while accurately reporting the severity of the fighting, gave sanitized and optimistic accounts of the battle to cater to the Japanese public. For

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\textsuperscript{20} Gordon, 204.
\textsuperscript{21}"Japanese on Final Leg of Drive on Nanking." \textit{The Japan Time and Mail} May 13, 1937, Front Page.
\textsuperscript{22}"Defenders Use Even Tear-Gas Bombs in Desperate Resistance." \textit{The Japan Time and Mail} May 13, 1937, Front Page.
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example, the paper neglected to mention the high Japanese casualty rate and the numerous failed attacks on Nationalist strong points around Nanjing. In fact, throughout the siege of Nanjing, the paper did not mention any Japanese casualties at all, instead focusing on the number of Chinese killed and captured. For example one headline proclaimed that “60 [Chinese] Men, one officer abandon resistance at the Gates of Nanking” while another read “12,000 Chinese Soldiers [were affected by] Gas From [their] Own Lines.” For the Japanese imperial army, only victories and advances were reported. In the article about the captured soldiers, it said euphemistically that the Chinese soldiers have become “voluntary captives.” The worst news reported about the plight of the Japanese forces concerned “severe” and “vigorous fighting.” Taken together, these articles insinuated the incompetence and foolishness of Chinese resistance while praising the bravery and discipline of Japan’s armed forces. The articles epitomized the use of euphemism and slanted reporting to advance a wartime agenda. The news account, which tended to depict the ease of victories and advances, stood in stark contrast to the account of the brutal, bloody, slow, and grueling fight around Nanjing described in Soldier’s Alive by Ishikawa Tatsuzo, a Japanese solider at the frontline. Even though Ishikawa himself was not immune from depicting Chinese soldiers and people as desperate, treacherous, and cowardly while glorifying Japan, the fact that he was a

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Japanese “nationalist” gave the brutal fighting and atrocities he attributed to Japanese troops more credibility.25

Under the same JM&T headline, the newspaper quoted General Matsui, commander-in-chief of Japanese forces, saying the “restoration of peace in East Asia will follow the fall of Nanking.” It suggested the Japanese high command’s hope that Chiang Kai-shek would acquiesce and accept the brutal terms of surrender after losing his capital. Such expectations proved to be unrealistic as the Chinese resistance, joined by Mao’s Red Army, entered a new phase of guerrilla warfare that reduced Japanese control to major cities and railroads. General Matsui also thanked the new state of Manchoukuo for its cooperation in the war. Even though Manchoukuo was a puppet state of Japan, the Japanese authority maintained the pretense of Manchoukuo’s independence and sovereignty for political reasons. Interestingly, numerous articles throughout the week tried to make it seems as if the Chinese people welcomed the Japanese invasion force.

In an article dated Dec. 14, many “autonomous groups” and the “people of North China” urged Chiang Kai-shek to quit the war.26 Another headline proclaimed “North China Fetes Nanking’s Fall.”27 Even more questionably, one piece claimed that the entire city of Tiangjiang, “including native quarter, was wildly rejoicing today over the complete occupation by Japanese forces of Nanking.”28 If The Japan Time and Mail was to be believed, it would appear that the majority of Chinese people welcomed the Japanese occupation and the destruction of their homeland. The assertion was ridiculous

25 Ishikawa wanted to increase the support and sympathy for the Japanese soldiers on the front by writing realistically about their harsh life. Ishikawa’s book was banned in Japan.
by most historical accounts, but the fact that this type of message was conveyed at all was noteworthy because it reflected the continued beliefs among some Japanese in a Pan-Asian ideology where Japan was not an imperial colonizer but a liberator bringing civilization and development to its backward neighbors, a belief continued to be propagated by Japanese revisionists today.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect about the Japanese’s press reporting of the war in China was what it did not report. As Japanese troops took control of Nanjing, they committed one of the worst atrocities of WWII. Surrendered Chinese soldiers, noncombatants, and children were rounded up and brutally executed by beheadings. Out of control Japanese soldiers proceeded to rape women of all ages, including children, and looted and burned buildings. The number of those killed remains a controversy even today. The Chinese government claimed that Japanese troops killed as many as 300,000 people while Japanese historians put the number of dead at a low of 40,000.29 Whatever the actual number, the sheer scale of the killings were undeniably gruesome. There is no doubt that Japanese troops committed these atrocities but the question remains as to why the Japanese high command, which was certainly aware of the lawlessness and chaos in Nanjing, did not rein in its soldiers. It is with great irony that *The JT&M* reported the restoration of “peace and order” following Nanjing’s fall.30 To underscore this claim, photographs on Saturday Dec. 18, 1937 depicted disciplined Japanese soldiers marching in columns into Nanjing and crowds of Chinese in Shanghai holding the rising sun flag cheering the fall of their capital.31 These images are such a far cry from the reality of violence and destruction taking place on the ground. Though the images were not “photo

29Gordon, 206.
30“*To Govern All China,*” *The Japan Time and Mail* May 15, 1937, Front Page.
31See image in Exhibit 4 in appendix.
shopped,” they were selectively taken, vetted and then printed in the *JT&M* to sell Japan’s war to its public. Likely, images of cheering Chinese crowds were staged. Whatever the case, the images intended to support Japan’s moralistic claim of bringing civilizations to China and show how even Chinese people welcomed Japan’s efforts.

Just like the Japanese economy and political system mobilized for war, so did Japanese publications like *Tokyo Puck* and *The Japan Times and Mail* rally around the national cause. The cartoons from *Tokyo Puck* showcased Japanese’s xenophobic and racist perceptions of Koreans and Chinese in the beginning of the twentieth century. Part of this perception came from the Japan centric view of the world dating back to the Tokugawa era where Japanese nationalists regarded themselves as the center of civilization. Another part of this negative perception was borrowed from the West and came from Japan’s need to identify with civilized Western nations. Japan, as a civilized nation, had a duty to lead Asia out of its backwardness by force and coercion if necessary. The cartoons are a testament to Japan’s overzealous nationalist ideology, which resulted in one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century: the Nanjing Massacre. During the week of the massacre itself, news stories from *JT&M* focused on the weaknesses of the enemy and the strength of the national army. Articles denounced Chiang Kai-shek as a dictator who had turned communist by joining with Mao, while depicting Japanese forces as saviors helping to build an autonomous and democratic China. The paper served its function to rally the public around Japan’s war of imperialist aggression by mincing words and cloaking it in the light of a Pan-Asian ideology. Excesses and atrocities by the Japanese military were ignored, while Japanese soldiers and leaders were cast in the role of honorable liberator for a grateful and adoring Chinese nation. These images and

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32.“To Govern All China,” Front Page.
articles of mass culture not only reflected Japanese public opinion but played an important part in mentally conditioning the Japanese public for imperial expansion and war.

*Taiwan*

We now step back from the events of Nanjing and flashback to the end of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). The war ended with a Japanese victory and the signing of the Shimonoseki Treaty where China relinquished Taiwan to Japan. The handover of Taiwan to Japanese control (and its postwar return to a Chinese regime) helps to explain the modern dichotomous character of the island nation. As American-Taiwanese scholar Leo Ching writes, “[Taiwan has dominant] Japanese colonialism and residual Chinese culturalism.”\(^3\) At first glance it seems counter intuitive for Ching to claim that Chinese culturalism is residual rather than dominant. After all, the vast majority of the island inhabitants are ethnically Chinese, most of them speak Mandarin, and the food and customs that Taiwanese practice comes from the mainland. Yet if one were to compare China and Taiwan economically and politically today, the sharp disparity between an industrialized and democratic versus a developing and communist regime becomes apparent. Taiwan, as an economic and political entity, resembles Japan more than it does China. Hence, Ching’s use of “dominant colonialism” suggests that the Taiwanese colonial experience under Japan profoundly shaped Taiwanese society even as the island retained its Chinese characteristics. Accordingly, Taiwan’s 20\(^{th}\) century history of economic and political development mirrored that of Japan. Taiwan like Meiji Japan

followed the “Bureaucratic Authoritarianism Industrializing Regime” (BAIR) path of development. Under the BAIR model, the country modernized under a right-wing autocratic regime that practiced capitalism mixed with strong state intervention to guide the economy. In its path to modernization, Taiwan benefited greatly from the industrial infrastructure left behind from Japanese colonialism.

For Japan, the acquisition of Taiwan marked its first experiment with managing a colony so it aimed to turn the island into a model. Unlike Western colonizers, who were simply interested in exploiting their colonies without investing significant resources into developing them, Japan spent capital to industrialize Taiwan. It also attended to the social welfare of the island inhabitants by introducing public education into remote areas and providing immunization and basic healthcare. James W. Davidson (1903), the Consul for the United States in Taiwan, praised the modernization that Japan brought to the island:

“The Japanese occupation will improve the position of the masses throughout [Taiwan]...It will bring thousands within the reach of modern conveniences, the railway, improved shipping facilities, good roads, etc. It will afford them modern medical treatment, the advantages of modern education, and will offer encouragement to the development of the island’s resources and the utilizing of machinery and other improved methods of manufacture.”

Davidson goes on to compare Japanese rule to the Chinese government administration of the island. He argued that the previous Chinese government invested nothing in the island while taking yearly remittances and exploiting Taiwan’s resources. In contrast, the Japanese not only spent Taiwan’s revenue locally, but also invested millions of yen into Taiwan’s economy.

34 Ching, 20.
The Japanese colonial government combined its program of development with the policies of Doka and Kominka to condition Taiwanese citizens into imperial subjects. 

_Doka_ constituted a policy of assimilation under the banner of “equality and fraternity,” and involved Japan’s active effort to de-Sinocize Taiwan. De-Sinocization ranged from the banning of Chinese cultural practices to the promotion of Shintoism and the use of Japanese. _Kominka_ entailed the “imperialization of the subject people” to make them believe in the divinity of the emperor, the greatness of Japan, and the glory of fighting for the Japanese Empire.³⁶

One point that some scholars emphasize to explain why Japan’s colonial policy differed from the West rests on the fact that Japan colonized racially akin people. Nevertheless, despite the propaganda of “equality and fraternity,” Japan polity still used terms like “Master Race” to justify Japanese domination of Asia.³⁷ In addition, racial affinity did not spare Taiwanese-Japanese citizens from economic and political discrimination. Japan’s policy of imperializing its subjects to make them Japanese soldiers but denying them equal civil rights lent weight to the claim that “one can die Japanese, but not live Japanese.”³⁸ The main argument given at the time by Japanese officials for the contradictory policy of assimilation and discrimination was that Taiwanese were too Han. So in theory Taiwanese status as second class citizen was transitory until they became fully Japanese.

Ching notably commented on this issue of coercive assimilation and exploitation. He argues that the crime was not so much the imposition of Japanese culture and the

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³⁶ Ching, 4.
³⁷ The term “master race” was used by Tojo at a Co-prosperity Sphere conference. See Lebra, Joyce. _Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in WWII_. London, England: Oxford University Press, 1975.
³⁸ Ching, 6.
displacement of the pre-constituted Chinese culture. For Ching, this “nativist argument” about culture displacement is a distraction from the real point. It is debatable in the first place what kind of original Chinese culture existed, and if it did exist, it could be argued that this Chinese culture displaced the preexisting aboriginal culture on the island. Ching accepts as a truism that “nations are imagined community” and “identity are historically contingent.” Such a fluid definition of national identity implies in theory that Taiwanese-Chinese could be conditioned to become Taiwanese-Japanese. The real issue for Ching is the “hypocrisy of cultural identification and political discrimination.” Thus, he dismissed Doka and Kominka as nothing more than “ideological formation” based on a “generalized [Japanese] culture” employed by the colonial government to distract the colonized from demanding real political and economic rights.

There were many instances of violations of those rights. In the judicial process, it was not uncommon for the Japanese authority to employ torture against Taiwanese civilians to force confessions. Wrongful imprisonments and executions of innocent persons ingrained within the Taiwanese people a “universal dread of the Japanese police” and a “general feeling of hostility” to Japanese rule. On legislative matters, when representatives of Taiwan submitted a petition for the creation of a Taiwanese parliament to administer the island as part of the Japanese Empire, the petition was turned down 15 times despite its sound legal and economic basis. The petitioners argued that the specific administrative and social needs of Taiwan could not be met by the Japanese Imperial Diet. In addition, the petitioner claimed that the colonial governor exercised both legislative

39 Ching, 7.
40 Id.
41 Colquhoun, 389.
and executive power in violation of the Japanese constitution.\textsuperscript{42} They argue that the Japanese Constitution should protect the inhabitants of not only the motherland but also Taiwan since they were by law citizens of Japan. The petition ended with a solemn oath of loyalty to the Emperor and the Empire. The uncompromising response from Tokyo shows that, the propaganda of equality and brotherhood notwithstanding, natural Japanese subjects were still superior to naturalized subjects because their rights were guaranteed from birth.\textsuperscript{43}

However, the injustices committed against the Taiwanese-Han were light compared to those committed against the many indigenous aboriginal tribes of the island. The aborigines were viewed as savages and had to endure land expropriation and forced relocation. They were put under tighter control and scrutiny as evident by the ratio of 1 Japanese policeman for every 57.5 aborigines versus 1 policemen for every 963.1 plain dwelling Taiwanese-Han.\textsuperscript{44} The colonial government also banned tribal practices that it considered to be barbaric, like facial tattooing. Before the Japanese, facial tattoos were considered sign of feminine beauty, but in order to attend the Japanese controlled school, tattoos had to be removed. The operation involved painful surgeries and left many women facially disfigured.

In 1930, the Taiwanese aborigine launched a rebellion to retake their forest and tribal land. For many aborigines, this was to be the final battle to drive out the invaders. In one aborigine village all the women and children committed suicide. It was believed that with no family to return to, the men would fight to the death until victory was

\textsuperscript{42} Davidson, 596.
\textsuperscript{43} Ching, 6.
\textsuperscript{44} Ching, 155.
Japanese troops squashed the rebellion in five years. Ironically, shortly after, the former rebels were recruited into the imperial army. The transformation from rebel to soldier proved quite dramatic as exemplified by the following poem written in blood.

“Long Live the Emperor
I am a Japanese Man
I have the Yamato spirit
However painful the task
If it’s for your Highness, for the nation
I would not think of it as trying
Please make me a soldier”

The author was an aboriginal soldier. The evident zealotry shown in the poem and his identification with the “Yamato spirit” shows the effectiveness of the propaganda of Doka and Kominka to pacify resistance and brainwash citizens to the Japanese cause.

Ukan’s, a retired policeman of the Taroko’s tribe, one of the few tribes to stubbornly resist Japanese rule, testified to the effectiveness of these assimilation policies. He recalled how his father, a former missionary for the True Jesus Church, underwent such a conversion. At one point, the Japanese authority captured his father and sentenced the Ukan’s father to death for his missionary work. However, the man escaped his bamboo prison after a terrible monsoon. Afterward, his sentence was commuted, and Ukan’s father went on to receive a Japanese education. Thereafter, his father would not let anyone say anything bad about Japan. Asked about the Taroko tribe’s present impression of Japan, Ukan claimed:

“There are no Taroko who hate the Japanese. Quite the contrary. They love the Japanese. . .the Japanese took them from the worst kind of feudalism and brought them civilization. It was the Japanese who brought them roads and electrical power plants.”

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45 Simon, 8.
46 Ching, 133.
47 Simon, 5.
For people like Ukan, his feelings concerning Japan were conditioned by his tribe’s experience with the corrupt government of Chiang Kai-shek who came to the island following Japan’s departure. He recalled that the Japanese provided education and health care and also negotiated with the indigenous population about access to land, something that the postwar Kuomintang government did not always do. These love and hate viewpoints are typical of the mixed legacy that Japan left behind in Taiwan.

Aboriginal appreciation of the modernization that Japan brought mixed with anger about Japan’s brutality and Japan’s perceived abandonment of “former Japanese” families who lost sons to the war. Even now windows of aboriginal and Taiwanese soldiers are demanding payment of pensions and compensation for victims. Much of this anger centers on the Yasukuni Shrine, Japan’s controversial shrine for its war dead, where 28,000 Taiwanese and 10,000 aboriginal men who died fighting for Japan are enshrined along with 11 Japanese Class-A war criminals. For many Taiwanese, the Yasukuni Shrine is bitterly insulting as a symbol of continued exploitation and abuse of their family name for the cause of Japanese ultra-nationalism, even as Japan has abandoned its post-war responsibilities towards it former subjects.

On June 13, 2005, a Taiwanese legislator led a group of aborigines to Yasukuni. The group’s intention was to perform a spirit cleansing ceremony on the grounds of the shrine to remove the spirit of their loved ones since the Yasukuni authority refused to do so. Japanese police prevented the symbolic action by refusing to let the protestors get off their bus allegedly to forestall the outbreak of violence with far-right protestors blocking the shrine’s entrance.48

48 "Families of Taiwan War Dead to Protest against Yasukuni Enshrinement." BNET (Aug. 14, 2006), http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDQ/is_2006_August_14/ai_n16621618.
A year later former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui visited the Yasukuni Shrine not to protest but to show his respect to his deceased brother who had fought for Japan. Lee claimed it was a private pilgrimage to honor his elder brother who died fighting for Japan in WWII. The former President explained, "It is completely personal; please don't think of anything political or historical." Despite his statements, the visit caused outrage in the People’s Republic, which accused him of harming Japanese-Sino relations and using the visit to push for Taiwanese independence. For many Chinese citizens, it must have been bewildering how former President Lee, who was ethnically Chinese, could pay homage at shrine that honors war criminals responsible for the Nanjing Massacre. This unusual pilgrimage and the Taiwanese aboriginal protests at Yasukuni demonstrate the non-monolithic “love and hate” relationship between Japan and Taiwan and its entanglement in complex geo-political considerations. Such considerations include Taiwanese desire for independence from China, and the view that Japan is an indispensable ally in this quest. By emphasizing the modernization, cultural connection, and the legacy of Taiwanese soldiers in the Japanese Imperial army, Taiwanese could disassociate their identity further from mainland China by drawing it closer to a shared history with Japan. The narrative and legacy of Japanese imperialism in Taiwan is far from linear or black and white, and the conflicted viewpoints of Taiwanese are indicative of a historical moment that touches on a theme that resonates across the study of empires, namely that the hatred of the colonizer towards the colonized is not symmetrically reflected in the attitudes of the colonized towards the colonizer.

Modern Day Convergence

The Yasukuni Shrine is but one among many thorns in Japan’s stormy relations with China, Korea, and Taiwan in the past few years. In 2005, widespread angry protests occurred in China and Korea over the approval of nationalist textbooks by the Japanese government that underplayed atrocities like the Nanjing Massacre. There is also the unresolved issue of Asian “comfort women,” military sex slaves, who were never formally compensated by the Japanese government. In 1993, the Japanese government issued an official apology, but in 2007 PM Abe claimed that the Japanese government “never coerced” women into becoming sex slaves. The PM comment’s casts doubts on Japan’s remorse for its crimes. These unhelpful statements by Japanese leaders demonstrate that Japan has not been able to come fully to terms with its imperialistic past. One must acknowledge that Japan has taken many positive steps like providing investment credit and huge aid packages for its developing neighbors, but critics will point out that these aid packages are often in Japan’s economic interest and aren’t necessarily signs of remorse. Instead, Japanese government officials appear to be insensitive. It is difficult to believe, for example, the sincerity of former PM Koizumi’s claim to “pray for peace” and his regret for the war when he regularly honored a shrine with a revisionist museum that glorifies war criminals and the Japanese Empire.

The Japanese government insensitivities and the country’s inability to resolve its controversial war legacy can be explained by collective amnesia, or the societal denial of

war responsibility, caused by the dropping of the atomic bombs, the Tokyo Trials, and the US occupation. The firebombing of Tokyo, the dropping of the atomic bomb, and the dire economic situation that followed the end of the war changed the perspective of Japanese from being victimizers to victims. Preoccupied with their own misery following defeat, the Japanese people had little time to think about the pain that they caused others. The Tokyo Trials that then followed did little to bring closure to the issue of war responsibility. Leo Ching decried the Tokyo Trials as “farcical justice” because the US shielded the man who appears most responsible for the war, the Emperor, for political expediency. The issue of war responsibility then became a joke, as historian John Dowers explained because “[i]f the man who in whose name imperial Japan had conducted foreign and military policy for twenty years was not held accountable for the initiation or conduct of the war, why should anyone expect ordinary people to dwell on such matters, or to think seriously about their own personal responsibility.”53 Instead, the trials resembled victor’s justice, undermining their legitimacy. The trials followed by post war US policy that focused on rebuilding Japan as an ally against communism created an environment where it was easier to forget about war responsibility. The US “Reverse Course” weakened those elements that would have been most conciliatory and accepting of war responsibility, the Japanese Left.54 At the same time, US planned reparation programs for countries who suffered under Japan also were abandoned, while many conservatives, who had roots in the wartime regimes, returned to power through the party that dominates Japanese politics today, the Liberal Democratic Party (“LDP”). In contrast, in West Germany and Italy, two countries that seem to have dealt more

54 It’s easier for the Left to accept responsibility because many were opposed to the war in the first place.
effectively with war-time responsibility, moderate leftish red-green coalitions came to power post-war.\(^{55}\)

As an economic behemoth in the 21\(^{st}\) century, Japan increasingly seeks a more assertive political leadership role in the world as demonstrated by its effort to secure a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.\(^{56}\) How successful and how accepting regional neighbors will be of Japan’s leadership will depend on Japan’s ability not only to learn from its achievements but also its mistakes. Japan needs to take conciliatory steps towards its neighbors that are symbolically significance but are also practical. I emphasize practical because conciliatory steps do not have to necessarily involve big monetary payout or open Japan to a barrage of compensation claims, something unpopular with the Japanese government and public.\(^{57}\) The first step that needs to be taken includes distancing the government from the Yasukuni shrine, which would have the immediate effect of easing diplomatic relations with Japan’s neighbors. Also, the Japanese government needs to formerly resolve the issues of comfort women and provide official compensations. The government continues to dodge this issue by providing a “voluntary private fund” to compensate victims, but not directly involving itself.\(^{58}\) These half-hearted measures convey insincerities and fail to put the controversy to rest.


\(^{56}\) Wingfield, 1.

\(^{57}\) Japan’s Supreme Court ruled in March 2007 on a case concerning slave labor that individual war time compensation claims had no standing because compensation had already been settled by the peace treaties concluded after the war.

Appendix

Tokyo Puck Image 1: “Woman in White Garment,” September 20, 1910
Tokyo Puck Image 2: "China Demands," May 10, 1911
Exhibit 4: Japan Time and Mail: Japanese Troops Parade into Nanjing

This image was used in the J&MT article on Dec. 18, 1937, but a digital copy was obtained from Wikipedia (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/7/74/JapaneseStormNanjing.jpg).

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59 This image was used in the J&MT article on Dec. 18, 1937, but a digital copy was obtained from Wikipedia (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/7/74/JapaneseStormNanjing.jpg).
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Secondary Source:


