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EAST ASIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE REVIEW

Recovering the Subject in the Shadows of Empires: Colonial Violence and Resistance in Taiwan

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Komagome Takeshi 駒込武. *Sekaishi no naka no Taiwan shokuminchi shihai—Tainan chōrō chugakkō kara no shiza* 世界史のなかの台湾植民地支配：台南長老教中学校からの視座 [Colonial rule in Taiwan in world history—From the perspective of the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2015. ISBN: 9784000610735.

The book under review here is the second monograph by Komagome Takeshi (1962–), a professor at the Graduate School of Education at Kyoto University. For over two decades, Komagome has been one of Japan’s leading experts on Japanese colonial education and Japanese colonialism in general. His first monograph, *Shokuminchi teikoku nihon no bunka tōgō* (The cultural integration of the Japanese colonial empire) (1996), is recognized as a seminal contribution to “empire history studies” (*teikokushi kenkyū*), a field that emerged in Japan in the 1990s and addresses a broader range of issues than “imperialism studies” (*teikokushugi kenkyū*), which has a narrower economic focus and is chiefly concerned with the imperialist penetration of Japanese capital. Not unlike works of “new imperial history” in English-speaking academia, Komagome’s 1996 book identified a field where metropolitan and colonial social formations intimately intersect with each other, demonstrating the historical role that education played in assimilationism (*dōkashugi*), a Japanese policy of cultural and ideological integration indelibly marred by racism.ⁱ

Colonial Rule in Taiwan inherits the positive elements of empire history studies, of which Komagome is a pioneer, but at least in two respects the book goes beyond that field’s conventional limits. First, Komagome places strong emphasis on the importance of engaging with the aspirations and claims of the colonized, viewing these as expressing the possibilities of historical subjects who are irreducible to imperial designs. Compared to Komagome’s previous work, this book takes a more localist perspective, engaging in an in-depth study of the struggle of

a colonized people—the Taiwanese—to maintain autonomy, and their attempts to transform a private Christian school, the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School. Although the focus is on one particular school, the book is not simply *about* that school; rather, as the book’s title suggests, it is a historical investigation written *from the perspective of* the school, highlighting the efforts of Taiwanese who strove to make the school their own, neither British nor Japanese.

Secondly, Komagome foregrounds historical settings that may be called “trans-imperial.” Britain as well as Japan played a significant role in the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School, which was founded and partly managed by British missionaries belonging to the Presbyterian Church in England. Komagome contextualizes both the attitude of the Japanese authorities toward this missionary school and the influence of Britain behind the scenes. By bringing British influence into the picture, this work departs from previous work on colonialism, which addresses colonialism as a phenomenon contained within a single empire.

The primary aim of this review is to explore the two dimensions introduced above, but let us first take a look at the contents of the book as a whole.

Overview

Written over a period of nearly twenty years, *Colonial Rule in Taiwan* is a towering achievement, approximately nine hundred pages in length. As a piece of historical research, it is based on an extremely careful examination of numerous firsthand sources, including official administrative records; published materials such as books, magazines, and newspapers; and unpublished sources, including personal correspondence. The book is divided chronologically into three parts, each of which contains several chapters.

In the introduction, Komagome presents the book’s aim and scope while touching on a series of key historiographical questions. Of particular importance here is his discussion of the relevance of ideas espoused by Benedict Anderson, Jürgen Habermas, and Hannah Arendt. Anderson’s reflections on the educational aspirations of colonized elites, Habermas’s theory of the public sphere, and Arendt’s analysis of the relationship between totalitarianism and imperialism guide Komagome’s arguments in parts 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

The three chapters in part 1 cover the historical period during which a new “civilization” gradually established itself in East Asia as a whole, and in Taiwan in particular. The traditional civilization that this new civilization challenged was one based on written Chinese as the

medium of intellectual discourse and Confucianism as the basis of sociopolitical ethics. In Taiwan, British missionaries and Japanese authorities found themselves sharing a desire to replace this Sinocentric order with a new, “modern” model. For their part, the leaders of the emerging Japanese colonial empire—with Hirobumi Itō, who served as Japan’s prime minister four times, being a key figure in the colonization of Taiwan (and later, Korea)—regarded Chinese cultural influence as an obstacle. Meanwhile, the Presbyterian missionaries—under the supervision of Hugh Mackay Matheson, a prominent trader connected with Jardine, Matheson & Co. and an influential supporter of the English Presbyterian Church’s overseas activities—viewed the sociocultural elements of the Ching dynasty remaining in Taiwan as a major obstacle to their missionary efforts. Matheson, a personal friend of Itō since the latter’s first visit to Britain, felt that Japan could be entrusted with the task of removing that obstacle by civilizing the island on Britain’s behalf. Moreover, at the end of the nineteenth century, it appeared to the missionaries that the Japanese government was rather tolerant toward Christianity, allowing missionary institutions (particularly schools and hospitals) to flourish under the patronage of leading politicians and administrators—a situation never dreamed of in the Ching Empire, whose authorities were explicitly hostile to any Christian activities.

Before colonization, Taiwan was a peripheral territory of the Ching Empire, which had, since the seventeenth century, reigned as the political and civilizational center of East Asia. Britain appeared on the scene in the mid-nineteenth century, effectively challenging the region’s “pre-modern” imperial order. Particularly in the wake of the Opium Wars, Britain began to treat China as part of its “informal empire,” extending its influence as a hegemonic nation. It was in this historical context that Japan entered Taiwan as a colonizing force. The number of British nationals in Taiwan at the time was small, but given Britain’s influence over the Ching Empire, it is not surprising that the Japanese authorities in Taiwan were highly conscious of their presence there. At the time, many Japanese politicians, administrators, and intellectuals regarded Britain with awe, partly because of its supposed mastery in the art of colonial rule, with “indirect rule” as its most advanced form. Japanese leaders saw Britain as a model empire to be admired and emulated. Rulers of the British Empire, for their part, had begun to see Japan as a possible partner in their imperialist expansion in Asia; the fact that Britain did not oppose Japan’s annexation of Taiwan was one sign of a newfound confidence in Japan as one of the “civilizing” nations of the world.

Chapter 1 of *Colonial Rule in Taiwan* describes how the English Presbyterian Church started its missionary activities in Taiwan, while chapter 2 analyzes how the British in Taiwan interacted with the Japanese authorities, who, after the Treaty of Shimonoseki, came to the island and set about colonizing it. Chapter 3 looks at how Taiwanese members of the church, such as Lee Chun-sheng, a man whose family had made a fortune trading with British merchants, responded to the rapid transformation of their island.

In these chapters, Komagome pays special attention to the aforementioned three individuals—Hugh Mackay Matheson, Hirobumi Itō, and Lee Chun-sheng. In discussing the trajectories of their lives, he draws partly on Benedict Anderson's theory of the origins of nationalism. Komagome points out that these three men all originated from relatively marginal corners of society. They were not natural-born elites but were more like parvenus who struggled to climb the social ladder by making use of what Anderson calls the “upward-spiraling road” made available to them by the empire (2006, 58). Matheson's genealogy could be traced to the Highlands, a region of Scotland that at the time was widely regarded as “uncivilized,” and Itō was born into a poor agricultural family in one of the peripheral domains of late feudal Japan. Lee's family was not among the traditional landed elites of the Ching Empire; rather, its fortunes were secured only through close connections with British traders. According to Komagome, the humble and obscure origins of these men explain their characteristic hunger for “civilization.” It was partly because of their sense of inferiority that they identified so strongly with the empire, which provided such non-mainstream elites with opportunities for upward social mobility.

Thus, both Matheson and Lee welcomed Japanese's colonization of Taiwan led by Itō, who was by then the prime minister of Japan. They expected that it would help their church's efforts to get rid of the cultural influence of the Ching dynasty, while paving the way for Taiwan's modernization. The problem, however, was that the order the Japanese government sought to establish was not based on Christianity. Neither was it liberal nor civilizing in ways that would necessarily turn the Taiwanese into universal subjects of modernity. As with any imperial system, Japanese colonialism in Taiwan had its darker side, with violence and racism as essential ingredients. Thus, potential tensions about what civilization was supposed to mean were unavoidably present among these men. As Komagome shows, even while Lee apparently “collaborated” with Japanese rule, he was not unaware of the colonial racism directed at Taiwanese people like himself, a dynamic that would become even more pronounced in later

periods after his death. After all, the “upward-spiraling road” of empire had its limits, ultimately closing its doors to colonized subjects.

Komagome’s aim in part 2 is to explore how, in the realm of school education during the 1920s, “the Taiwanese” emerged as a possible subject of history. From part 2 on, Lim Bo-seng (Mandarin pinyin: Lin Mao-sheng), a Taiwanese educator and intellectual, assumes a position of central importance in this book. After graduating from the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School, Lim moved to Japan for further education, graduating from the Department of Philosophy of Tokyo Imperial University in 1916. Upon returning to Taiwan, he began teaching as the deputy head of the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School, and later became the first Taiwanese to serve as chairman of its board of directors. The rest of *Colonial Rule in Taiwan* hinges on the dream of this member of the Taiwanese elite to transform the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School into a truly Taiwanese school. Part 2 also describes and analyzes the violence that would eventually annihilate this dream.

Chapter 4 focuses on the period from 1900 to the 1910s, discussing two campaigns promoted by members of Taiwan’s elite: one to establish a new middle school and the other to expand the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School into a comprehensive institution that also offered higher education. This is followed by a supplementary chapter that explains in detail the status of private schools under the First Educational Ordinance in Taiwan (1919). Chapter 5 discusses the Second Educational Ordinance in Taiwan (1922) and the Rules for Private Schools, demonstrating how these legal arrangements can be seen as oppressive to private schools such as the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School and showing how the people involved in the school struggled against such oppressive measures. Chapter 6 analyzes Lim Bo-seng’s PhD dissertation, “Public Education in Formosa under the Japanese Administration: A Historical and Analytical Study of the Development and the Cultural Problems,” which was submitted to Teachers College, Columbia University. In this chapter, Komagome explores Lim’s notion of “public education” (*kōkyōiku*), showing that it contained a radical, nationalist element. According to Komagome, Lim desired a “modern” kind of education for the Taiwanese. He believed that Japanese rule could potentially exert a positive influence on Taiwanese youth insofar as it would facilitate the introduction of modernity based on the idea of autonomy, whether in the Deweyan or Kantian sense of the term.ⁱⁱ In reality, however, the colonial state had deliberately tried to either undereducate or Japanize Taiwanese youth, instead of truly modernizing them. Thus,

Lim's "public education" was a radical idea that implied the possibility of a space for education that was free from imperial interventions. In such a space, the colonized would be able to cultivate and preserve their own language and culture, while at the same time realizing their potential as a universal subject of modernity.

In the concluding section of part 2, Komagome analyzes the kind of *publicness* envisioned by such elite Taiwanese men as Lim Bo-seng in light of Jürgen Habermas's seminal notion of the "public sphere." As Komagome notes, colonial societies were usually characterized by the structural absence of a public sphere, since the presence of a colonial state—by nature authoritarian—strongly tended to hamper the growth of civic spaces where individuals could gather freely and discuss their issues without restrictions from the state. But it is possible for the historian—in this case, Komagome—to at least historicize attempts by the colonized to go against the odds and create such spaces. Lim Bo-seng's efforts are particularly pertinent to the question of the public sphere, not least because he intended his school to be an autonomous space where Taiwanese would be able to cultivate and express their unique identity without succumbing to the imperial pressure of assimilation.

Part 3 centers on an incident called the "Movement to Denounce the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School," which took place in the spring of 1934 and was part of a campaign by Japanese authorities to discredit and oppress the school. As Komagome shows, the oppression escalated to the point where the use of terror, with the influence of the military lurking behind it, was commonplace. Particularly devastating to this private Christian school was the requirement by the Governor-General's Office that the school and its students worship Ten'no (the Japanese emperor) as a living god of Shintoism as a condition for being recognized as a designated school and thus granting its graduates permission to move on to mainstream higher education. This explicit move to the right had much to do with the rise of fascist totalitarianism in the Japanese Empire, which led to a series of violent persecutions of Christian schools, both in the metropole and in Japan's colonies. In the 1920s, the Governor-General's Office had oppressed Tainan Presbyterian Middle School through a set of legal regulations, which were implemented arbitrarily. In the end, however, this form of oppression was not completely successful. In part 3, Komagome shows that the final, fatal persecution of the school occurred in the 1930s. His analysis of the 1934 denunciation movement demonstrates that this was not just an isolated event taking place in a peripheral corner of the empire; rather, it signified the beginning of a process of

totalitarianization that would devour the entire Japanese Empire.

Chapter 7 deals with the years 1929 to 1933, before the denunciation movement occurred. In this period, the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School called for an alliance with other Christian schools within the empire to fight against the injustice of being forced to worship Shinto as a national and imperial religion. This effort proved to be in vain partly because one such school, the Catholic school Jochi (Sophia) University in Tokyo, was made a target of violent denunciation. The denunciation movement of 1934 is discussed in full detail in chapter 8. Komagome points out that this movement occurred at a time when there was growing tension between the colonial state and the Japanese Army stationed in Taiwan, with the latter increasingly getting the upper hand. The denunciation movement was one symptom of a wider imperialist anxiety about the Taiwanese campaign for autonomy that was being led by Lin Xien-tang. In the end, the movement to denounce the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School had a devastating effect on the school's dream of offering the kind of education for the Taiwanese that Lim Bo-seng had espoused. Chapter 9 deals with the two to three years after the 1934 denunciation movement, focusing on similar movements targeting three other schools in different parts of the empire: Tamshui Middle School in Taipei; Sujitsu School in Pyongyang, Korea; and Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. Komagome views these movements as an extension of the movement against the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School, in part because some of the same Japanese administrators and military officers involved in the 1934 affair also played a role in these subsequent denunciation movements after their bureaucratic transfers. Chapter 10 is concerned with the period that follows and describes the process by which a number of Christian schools throughout the Japanese Empire were forced to close down. Even the Christian schools in Japan, though they seemed to have more freedom, faced increasing difficulties after 1938. In the book's conclusion, Komagome returns to Lim Bo-seng, whose dream of a school for the Taiwanese had been crushed. How did Lim spend the rest of his life after Japanese colonialism finally came to an end? The postwar story of Taiwanese intellectuals like Lim Bo-seng and Lin Xien-tang who had fought hard for Taiwanese autonomy under Japanese rule is a tragic one. Following Japan's defeat in 1945, the Republic of China took control of Taiwan, with General Chen Yi in charge. Both Lim and Lin were shocked and dismayed to find that their new government treated the Taiwanese as second-class citizens because of their cultural difference as inhabitants of a peripheral island and because they had been influenced by the culture of an ex-

enemy as a result of colonization. Lim Bo-seng and others tried yet again to explore the possibilities of the Taiwanese as a people with their own distinct culture, history, and destiny, only to find that their efforts were met with suspicion. In the end, Lim, along with other intellectuals, was executed during the infamous “2.28 Incident,” in which the authorities of the Republic of China killed thousands of Taiwanese civilians who were alleged to harbor anti-mainlander ideologies.

Taiwanese Autonomy and Its Erasure by Colonial Violence

It is not Komagome’s intention in *Colonial Rule in Taiwan* to exaggerate the achievements or influence of the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School. Rather, the school is presented as a “dream”—albeit one that disappeared before being realized—of an autonomous space for a colonized people. In other words, Komagome is trying to salvage the erased voices of Lim Bo-seng and other Taiwanese like him, voices that vanished into thin air in the face of systematic oppression under Japanese colonialism. This particular small private school is of crucial historical importance for Komagome for two related reasons: first, because of the *potential* it once possessed as a vehicle for a radical challenge to Japan’s education policy; and, second, because of the colonial oppression that that very potential ended up provoking. While discussing Lim Bo-seng’s dream at length, the book devotes hundreds of pages to an exposition and analysis of the ways in which the same dream emerged as a menace to the colonizing Japanese, both government officials and others. This made the school an object of surveillance, legal-administrative discrimination, and, finally, denunciation—a series of mutually reinforcing measures that Komagome calls a form of “violence.”

How did the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School emerge as a target of colonial oppression in the first place? To understand this, it is imperative to situate this school within the broader context of colonial education in Taiwan. Like the rulers of other colonial empires—such as the British in India, Egypt, and elsewhere—the Japanese authorities in Taiwan faced a dilemma when it came to the question of how to educate colonized subjects, particularly those from respectable families with strong claims to access to higher education as a means of social advancement and political participation. In general, all colonizing powers were dependent on the support of so-called “collaborators,” and Japanese colonialism in Taiwan was no exception. The increasing demands by the Taiwanese elite for better educational opportunities for their offspring

had to be met in one way or another. Otherwise, the resulting dissatisfaction would turn into resentment against Japanese rule. This would not only mean failing to procure the collaboration of the elite of colonized Taiwan, but also, given their social influence, it could invite a spread of seditious sentiments in Taiwanese society as a whole. There was also growing concern that Taiwanese men of the respectable class might send their children overseas to attend missionary schools in mainland China and elsewhere, including schools that had been founded by North American missionaries. The perceived danger was that, unless the educational demands of the Taiwanese elite were met, the younger generation would be educated in environments beyond the reach of colonial surveillance and control. At the same time, however, by the time Japan became a colonial power, it had become recognized among the rulers of different empires that educating colonized elites in the image of the colonizer could be politically dangerous. At least until the mid-1910s, the dominant opinion among the Japanese authorities, who had the experience of the British in India to draw on, was that such education would raise the expectations of Taiwan's elite class too high, leading to unending claims for equality and demands for more white-collar jobs than could be accommodated. In a nutshell, the dilemma faced by Japan's colonial authorities was that educating the Taiwanese too much and educating them too little were equally dangerous.

It was against this background that the colonial state in Taiwan introduced what has been called a policy of assimilationist education (*dōkashugikyōiku*). In concrete terms, it was decided that the colonial state would provide Taiwanese youth with a new educational opportunity by allowing them to attend state-run middle schools together with Japanese youth; from these schools, the Taiwanese would be able to move on to higher education. On the surface, this appeared to be a state guarantee of equal educational opportunity for the colonized. In reality, however, this policy was intended as a safety valve to neutralize the two perceived problems mentioned above. On the one hand, it would be a response to mounting criticism among the Taiwanese elite that the government was neglecting their educational needs, and it would channel elite aspirations away from schools abroad, where their youth might be infected with "dangerous" ideas. On the other hand, the Taiwanese students who attended these schools would be thoroughly monitored and disciplined. They might yearn for higher things in life, such as a university education and a white-collar job, but only as isolated individuals and, emphatically, not *collectively* as Taiwanese. By requiring thorough conformity to Japanese culture, exemplified

by the punitive ban on the use of the Taiwanese language, the state middle school would serve as an apparatus that prevented the aspirations of members of the Taiwanese elite from developing into the sorts of expectations that were potentially threatening to the racialized relationship between colonizer and colonized. The only way for Taiwanese to move up the imperial social ladder was to go through one of these schools, but they had to do so at the cost of giving up their unique cultural identity, while enduring racist abuse from their Japanese classmates and teachers.

What Lim Bo-seng and other elite Taiwanese tried to do through the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School was to offer a radical alternative to the colonial state's educational policy. Implicitly criticizing the exclusive and strictly enforced use of Japanese in state middle schools, Lim's dream was to carve out an autonomous space where Taiwanese youth could cultivate their distinctive identity while at the same time preparing for higher education, which alone would guarantee social and economic advancement after leaving school. Only such a space could provide an escape route from the impasse Japanese colonialism had set in place: either give up upward mobility or "become Japanese" by rejecting their own identity as Taiwanese. It was precisely because of this radical, if not revolutionary, educational approach that this school emerged as a target of continuous oppression.

The Governor-General's Office in Taiwan took every measure it could to prevent the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School from putting into practice its radical educational philosophy. Oppression of the school was multilayered, and, from the 1930s onward, became increasingly explicit. One way for the government to incapacitate the school as an effective platform for Taiwanese autonomy was to cut it off from the mainstream education system, thus preventing its graduates from moving on to higher education. Unlike schools in the metropole, private schools in Taiwan were not given "designated school" status unless they met strict conditions in terms of both the percentage of qualified teachers and amount of reserved capital. Just when the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School did manage to meet these conditions, partly through financial support from anti-Japanese campaigners (who were not Presbyterians but helped the school for political reasons), the state imposed the condition that its pupils must worship the Japanese emperor as a living god of the Shinto religion—a highly humiliating requirement for Christian believers. It is not hard to imagine the torment that this must have caused both teachers and students. But, as Komagome argues, even more serious were the incurable divisions that this coercive measure created within the managing body of the school, divisions that eventually put

an end to Lim Bo-seng's dream.

In recounting the prolonged process through which Lim's educational ideal was oppressed and finally smashed into pieces, Komagome's point is, first, that this process should be understood as a kind of "violence," and, second, that the very concept of "violence" needs to be redefined and broadened beyond the simplistic and unproductive question of whether or not physical violence took place. As he sees it, the denunciation movement of 1934 was a violent act, and not just because it involved totalitarian terror or because of the threatening presence of the army in the background. It was violent in a more fundamental sense: it ripped apart the solidarity that had bound together the teachers and supporters of the school, splitting them up and pitting them against one another. Komagome argues that this power to divide and isolate colonized subjects should be placed within the wider context of Japanese rule. Such violence had already been applied to those Taiwanese students who attended the state middle schools, where they were thoroughly torn from their cultural roots by the pressure to "become Japanese," becoming isolated from one another as well as from the rest of Taiwanese society. In the 1930s, this violence became complete when it reached the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School—the only option as an escape route from the violence—and Lim Bo-seng was successfully removed from his position as chairman of the school's board of directors. It was at this moment that a set of interconnected measures designed to suppress Taiwanese autonomy bore fruit. The legal-administrative frameworks that regulated private schools should be understood as an integral part of this whole regime of colonial violence.

Of the totalitarian elements that characterized the violence of the 1934 denunciation movement, Komagome makes a critical point regarding the relationship between imperialism and totalitarianism. The concept of "State Shintoism" has been long used as a key to understanding the nature of Japanese totalitarianism. It has allowed us to see how enforced shrine attendance functioned as a mechanism for robbing individuals of their freedom of thought, depriving them of the possibility of solidarity against state injustice, and linking them directly to the state that was to mobilize them for total war. The problem is that Japanese scholars in the postwar era have tended to use this concept exclusively in relation to efforts within Japan to build support for the war, in ways that decouple totalitarianism from the colonial question. It is certainly true that this form of Shintoism was effective at home in identifying certain Japanese individuals as unpatriotic (*hikokumin*), and then having them denounced as an

“enemy within.” Komagome, however, argues that the question of shrine attendance was inseparable from Japan’s rule in its colonies, and that the very idea of state Shintoism has colonial origins. He points out that the concept grew out of an observation made by an American missionary, Daniel Clarence Holtom, regarding how the Japanese imposed shrine attendance on their colonized subjects precisely because the latter were “non-Japanese,” with a weak sense of allegiance to the empire and therefore potentially susceptible to the influences of rival empires. Following Hannah Arendt, Komagome argues that, in the Japanese empire as in others, totalitarianism was in part inspired by the kind of unmediated, naked violence that was more readily meted out to colonized subjects who were regarded as different, untrustworthy, and inferior. The denunciation movement against the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School is of great relevance here because it can be seen as a critical historical moment when two forms of violence—colonial and totalitarian—converged. Certainly, the domestic totalitarian violence of forced emperor worship helped create the idea of an “enemy within,” but this concept had already been applied to those Taiwanese Christians like Lim Bo-seng whose loyalty to the emperor was doubly suspect because of their status as colonial subjects and their belief in a religion connected with one of Japan’s enemies, the British Empire.

Articulating the Trans-Imperial

Komagome uses the term “world history” (*sekaishi*) in the title of the book. Why and how does he claim that the subject of his book falls into the category of world history? There is nothing novel in regarding the expansion of a colonial empire as “world-historical”; by nature, colonialism has almost always connected different parts of the globe, and the Japanese colonial empire was no exception. At its zenith, Japan’s overseas territories stretched well beyond the confines of East Asia, expanding into Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. However, it is not simply because of the physical expansion of Japan that Komagome claims that his subject matter is worthy of being considered world history. His idea of what constitutes world history goes far beyond the conventional sense of the term. What we are led to observe and understand through the vantage point of the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School is how the modern history of Taiwan was always situated *in between empires*, namely in between the Chinese, British, and Japanese Empires. What makes Komagome’s treatment of Japanese rule in Taiwan so unique is that it frees the study of Japanese colonialism from the traditional mold of

empire history studies, which has been almost exclusively about the Japanese Empire. The school in question was a Christian school founded and jointly run by missionaries who came from Britain—another colonial empire whose influence, whether as friend or foe, Japan could not afford to ignore. Inevitably, this school’s history unfolded under a relationship that I would call “trans-imperial.” It is precisely on account of Komagome’s highly original articulation of a trans-imperial terrain that his work can truly be called “world historical.”

By contextualizing the history of British missionaries within a shifting terrain of trans-imperial relations, *Colonial Rule in Taiwan* can be read as opening up new possibilities for the historical study of missionaries. Studies of Christian missionaries in the British Empire have abundantly demonstrated that they were neither an uncritical appendage of the civilizing mission of imperialism nor an uncompromising moral force fighting against colonial crimes. Rather, they often occupied a highly ambiguous position that was not reducible to any binary state. On the one hand, they were often complicit in imperialism, because the acquisition of new territories meant greater opportunities for missionary work abroad. On the other hand, their interests sometimes collided with those of the colonial state. For example, in British India under the rule of the East India Company, the colonial authorities did not like the idea of any noticeable presence of Christian missionaries because of the perceived danger of offending the religious sensitivities of India’s colonized elite, which would imperil the political stability considered essential for imperial exploitation. The missionaries, for their part, much resented the principle of secularism that the colonial state applied in educating the Indian elite, as this limited the prospects of the Christian education they offered.

While the ambivalence surrounding the presence of Christian missionaries in colonized territories has been well researched, a systematic exploration of how the same ambivalence manifested itself in contexts where colonialism was pursued by an empire other than the missionaries’ own is still lacking. Komagome’s work rectifies this historiographical absence. Part 1 of his book, for example, describes a certain ambivalence observable in the attitude of British missionaries toward Japanese rule in Taiwan in its early stage. While British missionaries sent by the Presbyterian Church in England welcomed the “civilizing” aspect of colonial rule, they abhorred the violence that Japanese authorities used in the late 1890s to quell uprisings by the aboriginal people of the island. Komagome notes that one missionary even went so far as to express his opinion in the English-language press that the Japanese themselves were too

“uncivilized” to be fit as colonial rulers. Of course, as shown in part 3, the British missionaries in the 1930s became critical of Japanese colonialism as its oppression started to target their own educational enterprises. Even then, however, their attitude was not always straightforward: while they viewed Japan’s imposition of Shintoism with distaste and fear, it is not at all clear whether they identified the problem as one of colonial violence or simply as one of religious persecution. As Komagome points out, not all British missionaries shared the dream of the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School as a platform for pursuing Taiwanese autonomy. They all shared with Taiwanese like Lim Bo-seng the goal of extending Christendom in Taiwan, but they were divided as to whether or not they should support Lim’s anti-colonial cause. In fact, Edward Band, the principal of the Tainan Presbyterian Middle School, criticized Lim Bo-seng and other Taiwanese members of the board of directors for what he considered their inflexible attitude; he finally chose to compromise with Japanese demands.

After all, these missionaries had come from Britain, the largest colonial empire in the world. It is not very surprising, then, that some of them were coldly indifferent to the passions and claims of a colonized people. As seen in the case of Korea, British missionaries, generally speaking, were critical of particular aspects of Japanese colonialism but remained faithful to the supposed promise of colonialism as a universal vehicle for civilizing the “uncivilized.” They made distinctions between desirable and undesirable forms of colonialism, with the former represented by their own empire. Komagome’s work suggests that such comparative thinking subconsciously influenced the attitude of British missionaries toward Japanese colonialism in Taiwan. By discussing British missionaries who operated in a colonial field ruled by an empire other than their own, Komagome’s work points strongly to the need for rethinking the relationship between Christian missionaries and colonialism in trans-imperial settings.

Conclusion

Colonial Rule in Taiwan is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of education and religion in East Asia under Japanese imperialism. With its exposition of the violent nature of colonial education, it offers a much-needed corrective to the prevailing myth—politically exploited by Japanese conservatives—that the colonization of Taiwan was smoothly accomplished because its people were supposedly more “pro-Japanese” than other colonized peoples, like the Koreans. Moreover, with its focus on the intimate relationship between religious

and educational policy, the book helps us come to terms with a series of issues that have plagued Japan in recent years. While writing this review, I could not help but be struck by how absolutely relevant Komagome's work is to contemporary Japanese politics. Almost all cabinet members of Abe Shinzo's government (as of April 2017) are members of the Shinto Political Alliance Diet Members' Association, the political wing of the Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership. Given the endemic spread of rampant racism targeting ex-colonial minorities and their schools, particularly since these "patriotic" politicians came to power, the book is an unsettling reminder that East Asia is still haunted by the ghost of colonial violence, the kind of violence experienced in Taiwan more than eight decades ago.

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Notes

- 1 For Komagome's contribution to the historiography of the Japanese empire, see Itagaki, Tobe, and Mizutani (2012, 283–285).
- 2 Kant's idea of autonomy is based on the notion of the individual self as a rational agent, whereas Dewey stresses the inseparability of the freedom of individuals from their role in, and responsibility for, the society of which they are a member.

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