

occasionally taking a clear stance. Thus, the publication is a mirror image of the scholarly work of the honoree, as described by Felix Wemheuer in his concluding chapter. The credit for this anthology, however, goes primarily to the editors. With this volume, the editors provide an important starting point for further multidisciplinary engagement with the promising research field of future thinking, planning and acting in China. It is an extremely readable volume that can be highly recommended for both experts and interested laypeople.

Stefan Messingschlager

SEIJI SHIRANE, *Imperial Gateway: Colonial Taiwan and Japan's Expansion in South China and South-East Asia, 1895–1945*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. 288 pages, 25 illustrations, 1 map, \$130.00. ISBN 978-1-5017-6557-5 (hc)

Imperial Gateway provides a compelling example of combining large-scale history with a micro-historical perspective, in an ambitious and successful attempt to implement a detailed history of the Government-General of Taiwan and its concept of “gateway imperialism”. Coined by Shirane Seiji, this term positions Taiwan as the “southern gateway” (*nanmon* in Japanese) through which the then nascent Japanese empire advanced between 1895 and 1945.

The book consists of six chapters organised chronologically across two parts. Part One covers the period from Japan’s formal acquisition of Taiwan as a colony to the eve of the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War; Part Two focuses on the mobilisation for total war until Japan’s surrender in 1945. Each chapter delves into the efforts of the Tokyo central government and Taiwan colonial administration to collaboratively build an empire while analysing the complex relationship between Japanese colonial authorities and Taiwanese subjects. The island served as a pivotal “launching pad” (p. 130) for Sino-Japanese relations and Japan’s engagement with Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. The author challenges Mark Peattie’s 1984 observation¹ that Taiwan was marginal to Japan’s long-term foreign policies, arguing instead that Taiwan was not a passive colony on the empire’s periphery but a unique centre that drove Japan’s southern military advance and embodied many wartime ambitions. To substantiate these assumptions, the author extensively consulted previously untapped source materials from six countries, as well as reports, periodicals and “ego-documents” – a core strength of this research. Unsurprisingly, these sources are used to “retrospectively historicise wartime experiences through selective memory and contemporary views” (p. 15) concerning Taiwan, Japan and South China.

1 Cf. Ramon H. Myers / Mark R. Peattie (eds): *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

While English-language scholarship has extensively explored the intra-imperial competition that emerged in Korea and Manchuria between the colonial authorities on the one hand and Japan's central government, army and navy on the other, Shirane Seiji identifies similar rivalries in Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule. The early contours of the institutional backlash can be seen in two protracted tensions. The first involved disputes between Japanese consuls in mainland China and the Foreign Ministry on one side, and the Government-General of Taiwan on the other, regarding the handling of the illicit opium trade run by overseas Taiwanese during the late Qing era. The author contends that the South China narcotics economy outstripped the control of Japanese colonial officials, revealing "the unexpected consequences and limits of Taiwan's gateway imperialism" (p. 53). Secondly, in the 1930s, despite reservations from the metropole, the Government-General sought to expand its administrative reach further southward into Southeast Asia. However, the Tokyo central government maintained that any autonomous initiative would constitute a blatant challenge to the colonial architecture.

Especially during the initial two decades of colonial rule, gateway imperialism was developed through a subtle strategy. Japanese colonial authorities strategically utilised both overseas Taiwanese and Chinese in South China – and partially in Southeast Asia – to advance the imperial project "by proxy" (p. 21). They extended jurisdiction and consular protection over naturalised Taiwanese, facilitating Sino-Japanese economic partnerships and supporting Japan's colonial ambitions in Asia. Nevertheless, loyalty towards Japan and its colonial project was not always unconditional. In fact, some overseas Taiwanese sought to obtain nationalities other than Japanese – Chinese, Dutch, British – to gain equal rights with ethnic Chinese and Europeans throughout South China and Southeast Asia. Moreover, amid escalating Sino-Japanese tensions from 1931 to 1937, the Government-General remained concerned about the possibility that anti-Japanese movements could be supported by certain overseas Taiwanese, even though the Chinese Nationalists increasingly suspected them as "running dogs of Japan" (p. 57).

Of particular interest is Chapter 4, as it explores the term *kōminka*. In 1936, the Government-General of Taiwan began using this term to refer to socio-cultural policies of subjectification aimed at transforming both Han and indigenous Taiwanese into ethnic Japanese. These policies led the colonial authorities to mobilise all available human resources for the escalating imperial war effort. The decision of Taiwanese subjects to accept *kōminka* was frequently motivated more by immediate benefits than by genuine conviction in a Pan-Asianist sense of loyalty and patriotism towards Japan (p. 102). Yet, at the expense of their own identity, the majority of Taiwanese internalised the Japanese Orientalist perspective of ethnic superiority over South China and Southeast Asian natives, viewing people through the lens of an imperial ethnic hierarchy. Although retain-

ing their inferior status within the imperial hierarchy of South China and Southeast Asia, Han Taiwanese were granted economic and social privileges by the Japanese military that elevated them above indigenous Taiwanese, Chinese and Southeast Asian people. Notably, the author highlights that imperial hierarchies were not solely determined by ethnicity, but also by gender. This was also the case with Taiwanese comfort women, who were compensated less than the Japanese but more than ethnic Chinese and Southeast Asian women (p. 127). This sensitive issue has been given ample space in the text.

Concluding, *Imperial Gateway* is an exceptionally strong study, with a readable narrative, that should be consulted by all scholars and graduate students of modern Japanese and Taiwanese history, settler colonialism and imperialism. Shirane Seiji embellishes the Epilogue with a noteworthy aim: the seminal methodological approach employed in his research seeks to counter the “neoconservative uses” (p. 174) of Japan’s empire-building history, which have long generated conflicting and contradictory interpretations over the past decades.

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