

Japan

Kate McDonald, *Placing Empire: Travel and Social Imagination in Imperial Japan*

Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. 254 pages. Paperback, \$34.95. ISBN 9780520293915.

Japan's victories in the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War led to the creation of a multinational empire, first with the acquisition of Taiwan in 1895 and later with the absorption of Korea in 1910. This was followed by the gradual takeover of Manchuria that culminated in the early 1930s with the creation of Japan's puppet regime in Manchukuo. The acquisition of new territories is a simpler task than the governance of these regions and the management of relations between the peoples of the colonizing nation and those in the colonies.

Kate McDonald, a professor of Modern Japanese History at the University of California, Santa Barbara, explores the relationships between Japanese and the locals of their newly acquired territories from the beginnings of the Japanese empire in 1894–95 through the end of the Allied Occupation of Japan in 1952. Her book is about the “spatial politics” of Japanese imperialism, that is, how the newly formed Japanese empire took over colonized lands by domesticating, disavowing, and disappearing other claims to the same land. McDonald stresses how the idea of place became central to the production of new forms of colonial hierarchy as empires in the age of imperialism tried to make the transition from territorial acquisition to one of territorial maintenance.

The focus of the book is on imperial tourism—how native Japanese toured their newly acquired empire and interacted with Taiwanese Chinese, Koreans, and the peoples of Manchuria, as well as how elite groups from these territories came to Japan to experience firsthand the modernity and power of their colonizers. The main actors of this work are “imperial travelers,” namely students and other Japanese who often took

packaged tours to Taiwan or Korea or even to Manchuria to see Japan's newly won empire for themselves.

Leisure travel had been a tradition in Japan dating back hundreds of years that had led to the travel poetry of such writers as Matsuo Bashō in the seventeenth century. Japanese had long traveled on pilgrimages to temples or to hot spring resorts for rest and relaxation. Imperial travel, which started as early as 1906, was encouraged so that Japanese could travel throughout the new empire and report back to other Japanese how magnificent this new empire was that now made Japan a new world power.

The world view shared by Japanese travelers “sustained unequal relations between colonizer and colonized” that “rationalized inequality as a feature of cultural predispositions and natural resources, and it transformed the space of the nation and empire into a self-evident hierarchy of natural complementarity” (161). This hierarchy is the key element in this new relationship in which “imperial travelers” occupied the “bottom rungs” of society (135). Even very well-educated Koreans like Syngman Rhee, future president of the Republic of Korea, were simultaneously recognized as Japanese nationals and denied natural rights of Japanese citizenship. The critical difference was that between imperial subjecthood and full rights as a citizen of Japan. Koreans were subject to the imperial decrees of the Japanese Governor General but lacked the voting rights of adult Japanese in the home country.

McDonald's analysis of these trends rests on a periodization that holds two phases of these imperial travels. The first she terms as the period of “the geography of civilization” when imperial travel was organized to better promote “the production and reproduction of Japanese subjects who had emotional bonds to the colonized land” (32). This period started in the very early 1900s and lasted through the end of World War I. Government officials and colonial boosters “viewed imperial tourism as essential to the production and maintenance of emotional bonds between the nation and its imperial territory . . .” (28). Japanese travelers were sent to explore their new empire to see for themselves that Japan had now become a major world power like Great Britain and the other colonial powers of the West.

The second generation of imperial travelers dates from the years immediately after the end of World War I and extends well into the 1930s and even the early 1940s. McDonald suggests that during this time the Japanese empire experienced a shift away from its civilizing mission of the first period and toward a “geography of cultural pluralism” based on what she terms “local color tourism” (105). Extending from Taiwan to the inner territory to Manchuria, “imperial tourism shifted away from representing the place of the colonies in terms of their progress toward Japanification and industrialization and instead offered the experience of ‘local color’ as its primary product” (103). The emphasis was now on the cultural differences between the constituent lands of the Japanese empire to show that Japan was proud of its multicultural and multifaceted empire. Guidebooks produced by the newly formed Japan Travel Bureau, as well as by students and other travelers from Japan, excitedly wrote about the unique cultural features of their new subjects. McDonald writes that about the special attention accorded old Korean men who lazily walked the streets of Korean towns with their white robes.

There are two points of discussion that were especially striking in their views of the relationship between Japanese and their new subjects. McDonald vividly shows how Koreans and Taiwan Chinese traveling or studying in Japan were made to suffer severe discrimination and harassment by Japanese officials. The second point deals with the

ability of subject peoples to speak Japanese. Many Japanese travelers were astonished to find how well many Koreans and Taiwan Chinese were learning to speak Japanese.

McDonald's book is copiously researched, well-written, and organized. It is an original and innovative work of high-quality scholarship. We see here for perhaps the first time how imperial tourism was an important implement in the building of the short-lived Japanese empire. We also see how many Japanese came to see their newly conquered lands, their peoples, and their relationships with each other. The reader will come away with a much deeper understanding of the cultural and social dynamics of the Japanese empire. *Placing Empire* will be of interest to scholars and students of modern Japanese history and to all persons studying the concept of modern empire-building.

Daniel A. Métraux
Mary Baldwin University