

## Guest Editor's Introduction

Lao-tse, an ancient Chinese sage, said “the hardest object may be penetrated by the most yielding and non-resisting object, water, through even the minutest cracks and openings.” Likewise, among the peoples of different countries, there is at least one thing that can pass through and back and forth quite freely, namely, culture. And indeed its freedom of movement is of primary importance, for it stimulates and cultivates higher civilization among new peoples.

The free interchange of culture among the different peoples of the world does not only deepen a degree of better understanding among them, but functions as if it were a friendly handshake of mankind. As grease keeps the wheels of a machine from burning, so does cultural intercourse mitigate friction between the peoples, and leads them into “the country without boundary” where they live a communal life of world brotherhood, instead of a rigid nationalistic life, surrounded by antagonism and suspicion. . . .

But, when we look around us we find that a strong sentiment of nationalism is prevalent everywhere. And some of those who adhere to this school of idealism

look upon cultural interchange as “cultural invasion.” They claim that culture is an expression of “nationalism” somewhat disguised, and its free interchange must be checked even by building walls against it. . . .

If the word “invasion” connotes the process of anything entering one country from another, well and good, the introduction of one culture to another would be an “invasion.” But in that case we must not overlook at least one important difference from such [an] act as military invasion, because cultural invasion neither endangers the life or property of the people whose land is invaded, nor is their happiness threatened thereby. On the contrary the invaded will be so much enriched by coming into contact with the new. —Hasegawa Nyozeikan, “You Must Know Me As I Know You”

When socialist-turned-nationalist Hasegawa Nyozeikan wrote these words in 1936, Japan was already over fifty years into developing its imperialist project in Asia. Empire building became an integral component of Japanese nation building soon after the establishment of the nation-state in 1868. Government officials felt that in order to compete with the leading nations of the world and maintain sovereignty, Japan needed to be more modern, and this in part translated as being aggressively imperialistic on the Western model. As the scholar of Japanese colonialism Mark Peattie has bluntly stated, there was a “self-evident connection between power and territorial expansion.”<sup>1</sup> In this sense, one can say that the Japanese modern imperialist enterprise was itself a reaction to imperialism. To borrow a phrase from John and Jean Comaroff, it was the result of a “colonization of consciousness,” clearly manifested in the Japanese modernization project of “civilization and enlightenment” (expressed in the buzzword “*bunmei kaika*”).<sup>2</sup> This project produced a skillful (and strategically selective) mimic representation of Japan’s Western cultural colonizers inaugurating everything from a new constitution with attendant ceremonial pomp and circumstance to imperialist enterprises at home and abroad.

Japan’s dual location as colonized and colonizer, and the extent to which the two identities interpenetrated, provides a unique opportunity to interrogate these persistent binaries. Moreover, while the colonial relationship traditionally has been seen as unidirectional and merely coercive, recent scholarship has shown that the identities of the metropole/empire and

periphery/colony were mutually constitutive, leading Edward Said, among others, to call for a “contrapuntal reading” between the two.<sup>3</sup> The colonies by their very existence reformed Japan as much as Japan shaped colonial space.<sup>4</sup>

Japanese empire building began with domestic consolidation within the Japanese archipelago that involved colonizing formerly Ainu and Ryukyuan territories to the north and south, incorporating them into Japan proper in the 1870s. Japan's sphere of interest then soon expanded with the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 to incorporate Taiwan (Formosa), which remained a colony until the end of the Asia Pacific War. The formal empire further expanded to include Korea, first as a protectorate in 1905 and then annexed as a colony in 1910. Japanese formal colonial territories also included southern Sakhalin (Karafuto), portions of the Liaotung Peninsula (the Kwantung Leased Territory), and islands in Micronesia. Victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 provided Japan with leaseholds in north China (southern Manchuria) that were later expanded and transformed into the Japanese puppet-state of Manchukuo after the Manchurian Incident in 1931. By the late 1930s the articulation of an informal Japanese empire in the pan-Asianism of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere brought a large portion of East Asia and its environs under the umbrella of the Japanese imperialist vision, which was then concretized by military conquest during the Asia Pacific War.<sup>5</sup>

As Homi Bhabha has clearly explicated, nations are narrations.<sup>6</sup> They have an overriding impulse for self-definition. The self-defined community of the Japanese nation was a means by which to transform individuals with disparate interests into self-conscious, unified Japanese imperial subjects. And within this shifting process of self-definition we must situate the cultural representations of Japanese empire at home and abroad. Studies of Japanese imperialism have extensively documented the construction of the empire in terms of the political, economic, and social components of colonial rule; but relatively less has been written about the cultural mechanisms that accompanied these policies, and practically nothing has addressed the visual instantiation of Japan's cultural relationship with its colonies, which of necessity must be triangulated with articulations of Japanese identity vis-à-vis the imperialist powers of the West.<sup>7</sup> Formations of Japanese national

identity and subjectivity were unquestionably intertwined with representations of its others. In his prefatory essay “Two Exotic Currents in Japanese Civilization,” penned in 1930, Nitobe Inazō, a member of the House of Peers and a well-respected thinker, inscribed Japan as the critical nexus in this triangle:

Japan is more than herself. She is Asia and Europe in one. As two ocean currents, the one flowing from the north and the other from the south, wash and meet at her shores, and furnish her with [a] wealth of sea products, so do two cultural streams, the occidental and the oriental, run in her soul, now uniting and now separating but always enriching its contents with their several tributes. Her past shows that Japan is the place where exotic culture finds easy lodgement, and her present promises that in the future she will play still more the rôle of a mediator between the conflicting cultures of the East and the West. So to be is her mission in universal history and her contribution to mankind.<sup>8</sup>

The objective of this special issue is to explore the ways in which visual culture produced during the years of the Japanese empire both envisioned and sustained a diverse imperialist enterprise in East Asia that extended to representations in Euro-America. Martin Jay has reiterated the belief among many scholars that there was a distinctive privileging of the visual in modern Western culture, which one can surmise was effectively communicated to the non-Western world as part of the ideological underpinnings of the modernization project of imperialism. Jay writes of the “ubiquity of vision as the master sense of the modern era” but qualifies this with a careful consideration of competing scopic regimes.<sup>9</sup> Over a decade ago he argued that “the scopic regime of modernity may best be understood as a contested terrain, rather than a harmoniously integrated complex of visual theories and practices. It may, in fact, be characterized by a differentiation of visual subcultures, whose separation has allowed us to understand the multiple implications of sight in ways that are now only beginning to be appreciated.”<sup>10</sup> Recent scholarship has brought together the burgeoning fields of postcolonial studies, culture studies, and visual culture studies to illuminate the integral role of vision and visuality in the formation of colonial modernity. As the authors in Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn’s edited volume *Colonialism and the Object* well

demonstrate, art and other cultural objects/artifacts mediated the power relations underlying the colonial project.<sup>11</sup> Through an examination of a wide range of cultural forms and practices such as exhibitions, photography, tourism, aesthetic appreciation and interpretation, collecting, consumption, personal adornment, and the built environment, the essays here continue to expand this line of inquiry, revealing how visual culture vividly imaged the often imperceptible aspects of the colonial relationship.

While this collection takes Japan as its principal focus, the widespread impact of Japanese imperialism on the development of continental and peninsular culture during the first half of the twentieth century and into the postcolonial era makes the issue of pressing concern for anyone interested in the study of modern East Asia.

### **Culture and Imperialism**

As Hasegawa shrewdly notes in the epigraph to this essay, culture was a powerful tool for crafting international relations, a tool often so malleable, transportable, and imperceptible that it masked its own profound instrumentality. Yet there is no comprehensive definition of the term *culture* that suits every purpose. While Hasegawa's usage of the term accords with one definition proposed by Raymond Williams, where culture is broadly conceived of as "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development," the essays included here collectively articulate a slightly narrower interpretation akin to Williams's alternative reading of culture as "the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity."<sup>12</sup> Within this framework, the authors analyze material production, systems of signification, and the production of meaning.

The cultural mechanisms formed under the rubric of imperialism are sometimes viewed as a form of "cultural colonization" to underscore their material as well as ideological aspects. It bears mentioning here that the terms *colonialism* and *imperialism* take on overlapping meanings when employed in regard to culture. While colonialism refers to the direct control of one power over a dependent area or people, it has been more loosely interpreted in the cultural sphere to include forms of ideological suasion or coercion that have comparable influence in geopolitical terms when based on unequal

power relations or when used in conjunction with direct colonial control. Interpreted in this sense, it is analogous to imperialism, which refers to the extension of the power and dominion of a nation either directly or indirectly over the political, economic, and in this case, cultural life of other areas. Although none of the authors in this issue in any way means to equate the physical hardships of colonization with its often more indirect cultural ramifications, we still want to emphasize that the manipulation of culture to cement colonial policy and the effects of cultural policy on both the colonizer and the colonized were formidable, and that these forces should not be excluded from any consideration of Japan's colonial project.

Since the cultural projects discussed here took place during the tenure of the Japanese empire, there is a direct connection to formal and informal manifestations of colonialism. But the continuation of related cultural practices into the postwar period after the dissolution of the colonial empire, when cultural domination was predicated more on the global reach of capitalism than on the political or economic system of imperialism, calls into question this somewhat arbitrary division. Due to the limits of space and the pressing need to address the pre-1945 period in greater depth, however, we must leave discussions of the later period to another time.

### The Project

The articles in this issue are organized largely chronologically, roughly spanning from the beginning of the Meiji period (1868–1912) through the Pacific War. In spite of the rapidity of change during this period, a number of concerns continue to recur throughout. Defining and differentiating Japaneseness vis-à-vis the West and within Asia was an ongoing project requiring constant renegotiation in relation to changing geopolitical conditions. Japan's drive for self-definition gave rise to a range of neotraditionalist and pan-Asianist cultural theories, as well as a curious form of exoticizing occidentalism. Japanese intellectuals struggled to create a usable past with correlate traditions, in the process essentially orientalizing themselves. Proponents of pan-Asianism couched their imperialist manifest destiny in terms of purveying enlightenment to revive the decaying cultures of Asia, thereby orientalizing Asian others.

The authors represented here show the multiplicity of theoretical axes upon which examination of culture under Japanese imperialism can proceed. Undoubtedly public presentation for consumption by others was a critical arena of visibility for all of these projects, whether through the costuming of the individual body, the reformulation of domestic space (public and private), the reordering of international or colonial space, or the creation of a virtual space through the mass media. In the end, all the projects hinge on the question of who among a wide array of competing interests will exercise the ultimate command over representations.

Christine Guth's contribution, "Charles Longfellow and Okakura Kazuzō: Cultural Cross-Dressing in the Colonial Context," reveals how the self-conscious act of clothing the body (including tattooing) was enlisted by Longfellow and Okakura, two culturally distinct yet surprisingly comparable individuals, "to fix identity and underscore otherness," which, as she forcefully argues, served both "to reinforce and subvert dominant colonial ideologies." Guth employs the term *cultural cross-dressing* to refer to the rhetorical use of clothing as a strategy of self-presentation where the individual is able to re-ethnicize through costuming. But, she notes, intention and reception often diverged as one could never have total control over self-fashioning.

In an age of mechanical reproduction, the critical function of photography as a means of framing self-representation is brought into sharp relief in a number of the essays. The photograph provided a manipulable but seemingly unmediated record of the staging of identity. In the context of Japan and East Asia the photograph was additionally imbricated with its contemporaneous touristic use for authenticating exotic experiences of the Orient. And this was not limited to the Western tourist. Whereas Longfellow cloaked himself in exoticized images of traditional Japaneseness by donning a tattooed collage of orientalist fantasies, Okakura also took on the role of tourist with alacrity while traveling in China and India (Japan's Asian others), his strange pan-Asian tunics an expression of the liberty of eccentricity taken by a tourist in a foreign land.

The question of photographic representation reemerges in Jordan Sand's article "Was Meiji Taste in Interiors 'Orientalist'?" this time in relation to the reordering of the domestic interiors of the Meiji elite in metropolitan

Japan. Sand argues that the highly selective eclecticism of Meiji home decoration photographically illustrated in the women's journal *Fujin gahō* (Ladies' graphic) was a kind of "colonization of the lived environment," because it reinscribed the colonial mentality through commodified representations of Japan's orientalizing and occidentalizing view of its others. The triangulated relationship in this case manifests itself in Western-style reception rooms.

Magazines like *Fujin gahō* and other pictorial journals also exemplified the profound connection between the colonial mentality and capitalist consumerism in the metropole. Capitalism and consumerism were integral to the colonial project on a number of levels. Most blatantly, the urge for territorial expansion was linked to the search for additional economic resources (agricultural and industrial). This search extended to aesthetic commodities as well. Kim Brandt demonstrates in her essay, "Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea," that a group of Japanese art collectors generated a new domestic audience and market for Korean pottery in the 1920s and 1930s that extended beyond the circumscribed sphere of wealthy tea enthusiasts by producing exoticized knowledge of "Yi dynasty wares," which satisfied metropolitan tastes for authentic Asian artifacts but offered more affordable wares than those that had been imported from earlier periods. This knowledge, intentionally or not, contributed to the Japanese colonial project in Korea by buttressing notions of Korean culture as melancholic and stagnant, which naturalized and legitimized Japanese colonial paternalism. It also helped systematically strip Korean colonial subjects of their antiquities.

Yanagi Sōetsu, later the central proponent of the Japanese folk craft movement (*mingei undō*), was one of these professional aesthetes who served as an arbiter of taste among the Japanese urban elite. Like Hasegawa, Yanagi also saw art and culture as a means of resolving conflict between Japan and its others, writing, "Art transcends frontiers and the differences of men's minds." But as Brandt effectively argues, Yanagi's intentions cannot be construed in any simple sense as mere collaboration with a Japanese colonial agenda in light of his ardent championing of Korean cultural autonomy and his fervid opposition to the homogenizing processes of modernity. Yet preservation and maintenance of Korean cultural patrimony under Yanagi's plans continued to reside with the Japanese, who were deemed uniquely

qualified to appreciate and safeguard Asian culture, once again reinscribing the legitimacy of colonial rule. Evidence of Yanagi's efficacy in marketing Asian folk crafts shows the extraordinary extent to which the "*mingei* myth" of authenticity, as opposed to the impure, hybrid products of modernity, has been assimilated by the Japanese general public and Western aficionados of Asia. This myth still supports a strong market for handcrafted goods from small trinkets to exorbitantly priced art objects, the artifacts produced by Yanagi's craftsmen colleagues now suitably installed in his folk craft museum, individual house museums, and prefectural collections—all enshrined as must-see tourist sights.

As mentioned above, the tourist industry was deeply implicated in the colonial relationships in the region from the very beginning as annexation of land provided a physically and ideologically extended destination for the visitor. Needing to produce an attractive visual representation of the empire in order to sell the destination, the tourist industry reinforced colonial identities. In my article, "Touring Japan-as-Museum: *NIPPON* and Other Japanese Imperialist Travelogues," I argue that the Japanese Western-language promotional magazine *NIPPON* served as both a propagandistic self-representation and an invitation to the Western tourist to authenticate the Japanese empire. By modifying "Japan" to suit the tourist's expectations, the magazine accommodated the colonizing gaze of the West. Sand finds a similar impulse in the spatial reformation of the Japanese home in the reception room, which was redesigned partly on a Western model to accommodate Western visitors or, more commonly, Japanese visitors in Westernized dress (such as the emperor in his new shoes), who required a suitable room for their costuming.

The centrality of representations of women and women as consumer subjects in Japanese cultural imperialism is also stressed in several of the essays. For Sand, elite Japanese women, readers of *Fujin gahō*, were consumers of the commodified exoticized Meiji interior. They were also the subordinated subjects of a colonial relationship that was displaced onto the home with male authorities validated as instructors of proper decoration and their wives subservient students of this civilizing enterprise. The home, then, became a crucial site for establishing and legitimating the power relations that sustained Japan's entire imperial order. In my essay, women of the metropole

and the colonies are subjects of a multidirectional orientalist and colonialist gaze that reveals the constant slippage between colonizer and colonized as Japanese national political concerns were embodied in the autoethnologizing representations of the empire.<sup>13</sup>

The constant renegotiation of identity in Japanese architectural discourse is addressed in Cherie Wendelken's commentary, "Pan-Asianism and the Pure Japanese Thing: Japanese Identity and Architecture in the Late 1930s," which like Sand's essay does not focus on governmental monuments but, rather, on the equally exalted spaces of the Buddhist temple and the modern home. By reexamining areas of architectural production that historically have been seen as immune to the political tumult of the period, the author shows that the stylistic hybridity of the architectural programs designed by celebrated architect Itō Chūta for the True Pure Land Sect went hand-in-hand with the sect's aggressively expansionist missionary activities, which while couched in terms of universalist religious values, were in fact intimately connected to the Japanese war machine. At the same time, the Japanese-style "new *sukiya*" elite residences built by Yoshida Isoya provided nostalgic sanctuaries that reinforced notions of Japanese aesthetic purity. In this respect, she argues, nonofficial architecture supported the goals of empire as much as monuments to the loyal war dead. Wendelken's observations reveal the almost schizophrenic obsession of Japanese intellectuals with determining the unique nature of Japan's cultural contribution, whether it be pure or hybrid, original or appropriated.

The world theater of international expositions proved an effective forum for presenting constructed images of Japanese culture and for asserting Japan's emergence as a full-fledged, world-class imperial power. By exhibiting a "microcosm of the larger imperial domain" in the Euro-American arena, and by displaying "the malleability and transportability" of the "secondary or lesser cultures" of its colonies, the Japanese government hoped to demonstrate its superior position in Asia.<sup>14</sup> In Asia, Japanese exhibitions asserted metropolitan power in colonial space. Analysis of Japan's participation in world's fairs reveals the country's representatives as dynamic agents in self-presentation.

In "The Sole Guardians of the Art Inheritance of Asia': Japan at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair," Carol Ann Christ presents one of the earliest

international expositions in which Japan promoted itself as an imperialist power, more precisely, as the *only* imperialist power in Asia. As an official spokesman of Japanese culture at the fair, Okakura declared that Japan was the “sole guardian of the art inheritance of Asia,” with the exhibits at the fairgrounds as evidence of the country’s capacity for cultural leadership. In its function as conservator of Asia’s artistic legacy, Okakura envisioned Japan as a museum, an institutional type that was recognized by many at the time as legitimating culture and providing a privileged space of public presentation. Twenty-five years later, *NIPPON* would continue Okakura’s vision by constructing a virtual tour of Japan-as-museum.

For the Japanese, Christ argues, fine arts, the highest category of artistic production in the Western canonical cultural hierarchy, was the preeminent domain for displaying national civilization. For this reason, the Japanese representatives at the St. Louis fair placed particular emphasis on Japan’s display in the fine arts pavilion. Christ also reveals how the Japanese promoted their civilization at the expense of the Chinese, who were denied an equivalent voice on the fairgrounds because of geopolitical circumstances.

The articulation of a division between civilized and uncivilized races was used as a justification for colonial expansion throughout the imperialist world. In St. Louis, Japanese civilization was manifested in its contribution to the rarefied realm of fine arts and in its command over the representation of the empire’s primitive colonial subjects, the Ainu and the Taiwanese aborigines, displayed in their native habitats. Guth’s essay complicates the relationship between the civilized and uncivilized—colonizer and colonized—in her discussion of the carnivalesque association of tattoos worn by Longfellow to symbolize his entry into the uncivilized races, which segues into a related subject taken up by Leo Ching in his essay, “Savage Construction and Civility Making: The Musha Incident and Aboriginal Representations in Colonial Taiwan.” Ching addresses the relationship between the Japanese colonial government and the head-hunting aborigines of colonial Taiwan (the same aborigines exhibited in St. Louis). After a wholly unexpected, shockingly brutal rebellion by the supposedly domesticated aborigines, the Japanese were forced to reconsider their colonial policy, gradually turning away from the direct use of force to the manipulation of culture as the “privileged sphere in which colonial power was exercised and consolidated,” a

process referred to as “imperialization” (*kōminka*). Integral to this imperialization process was a civilizing mission akin to the *mission civilisatrice* of the French colons, which in this case sought to transform aboriginal savagery into patriotic civility. The civilizing mission justified Japan’s colonial project in Asia through moral elevation, as Japan purveyed enlightenment and the benefits of modernity to the darkest, most primitive regions in Asia. Ching shows how various forms of symbolism, most prominently popular myths and their visual representation, were used to facilitate this process. However, with the incorporation of savages into Japan, aboriginal issues became part of the Japanese metropolitan consciousness, and the colonizers began to uncover the barbarity within themselves.

Mark Peattie has written that “colonialism was as much a state of mind—a constellation of attitudes and assumptions—as it was a system of bureaucratic mechanisms, legal institutions, and economic enterprises.”<sup>15</sup> The essays in this issue reveal how the Japanese colonial state of mind was constructed in a triangulated relationship with its others, Asia and the West. Culturally, Japan was simultaneously colonized and colonizer, two positions that mutually resonated to form a unified, but still deeply conflicted, whole. In any analysis of the cultural forms spawned during the period of Japanese imperialism, the constantly shifting field of representations and the dynamic agents who functioned within this field must never be forgotten, as they illuminate the critical role of art and culture in the formation of empire.

Gennifer Weisenfeld, Guest Editor

## Notes

- 1 Mark Peattie, introduction to *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*, ed. Ramon Myers and Mark Peattie (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 7.
- 2 John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992), 235–263.
- 3 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 66. See also Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).
- 4 Two excellent recent examples of this kind of study on Japan are Louis Young, *Japan’s Total Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), and Jennifer

- Robertson, *Takarazuka* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), chap. 3, "Performing Empire," 89–138.
- 5 For a detailed historical consideration of the Japanese colonial project see Myers and Peattie, *Japanese Colonial Empire*, and Peter Duus, Ramon Myers, and Mark Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895–1937* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989). For more specific considerations of the colonization of Korea and the colonial project in Manchuria see Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), and Young, *Japan's Total Empire*.
  - 6 Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990).
  - 7 For recent scholarship on colonialism and culture in East Asia see Tani Barlow, ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).
  - 8 Nitobe Inazō and others, *Western Influences in Modern Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 1.
  - 9 Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 3.
  - 10 *Ibid.*, 4.
  - 11 Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, eds., *Colonialism and the Object* (London: Routledge, 1998). For a survey of recent interdisciplinary developments in the study of visual culture/material culture in relation to colonialism see the introduction to this volume. For an example of some of the innovative work being done in this area related to Asian culture, specifically Buddhism, see Stanley Abe, "Inside the Wonder House: Buddhist Art and the West," in *Curators of the Buddha*, ed. Donald Lopez Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 63–106.
  - 12 Quoted in John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 5.
  - 13 The term *autoethnologizing* is taken from Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 29.
  - 14 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 112.
  - 15 Peattie introduction, 5.