“Traveling the Former Japanese Empire: Reconciliation or Revision”

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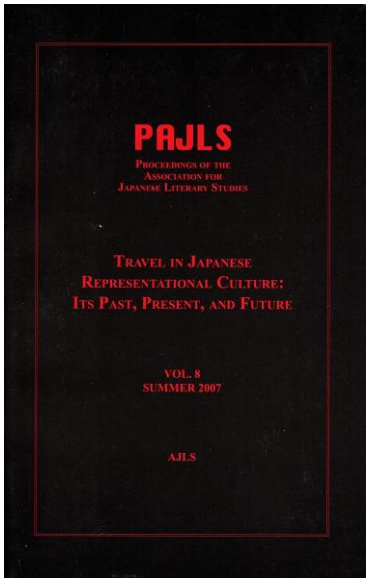

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TRAVELING THE FORMER JAPANESE EMPIRE: RECONCILIATION OR REVISION?

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Although cultural, and especially literary, representation of travel is both ubiquitous and an important a part of present-day Japanese culture, contemporary Japanese travel writing has been almost completely ignored by scholars both inside and outside Japan.[1] Little has been written in English dealing with anything written after the Meiji-era materials which form the basis of Joshua Fogel's *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China*, and in Japanese, all that can be found relating to post-war travel writing are the interesting and useful works of Maekawa Kenji, himself a prolific travel writer, though these are written for popular consumption and have no theoretical pretensions. With such a promising amount of material waiting to be researched, it seems clear that we need to raise the level of academic interest and theoretical analysis of such materials closer to that which is displayed in scholarship on travel writing in English and other European languages. Furthermore, where the most common approaches in the West have been guided by a post-colonial consciousness, in Japan what we still almost always find in the studies of *kikō bungaku* that are made are the aesthetic or philologically-based approaches of traditional *kokubungaku*.[2] These tend to be introductory or explicatory, and usually avoid theoretical or political questions that might actually have some significance in contemporary Japan—on ethnic relations within or international relations without. I find this particularly important, because international travel has become commonplace in Japan—a normal part of life for many people. And yet discussion of the economic, ethical, and cultural issues that are involved when one comes into contact with people from other cultures, races, and classes are for the most part left un-discussed, and popular media related to travel tends to be Japan-centric, culturally narcissistic, and wildly insensitive to economic difference.[3]

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[1] This paper was researched and written under the auspices of a one-year overseas research leave from Kansai University.

[2] Most notable in this field is Itasaka Yoko's vast amount of work on Edo-period travel writing.

[3] By popular media I have in mind mainly network television, where upwards of 20-plus hours of programming per week is dedicated to travel shows. This would also, however, include things like travel magazines and tour advertisements.

THE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION IN TRAVEL WRITING

With these challenges in mind, I wish to apply one theoretical concept, that of reconciliation, to some very recent travel literature. Though this concept, which has of course been influenced by post-colonial thought, has been a major theme in travel writing practice in English since at least the early 1980s, the idea of reconciliation as a theoretical approach to travel writing has not yet been satisfactorily established in English scholarship. It is being developed in the work of scholars like Peter Bishop and Tim Youngs, primarily in relation to travel writing describing contact with Aboriginal peoples in Australia.[4] The importance of the concept is well borne out when we look at just how much travel writing engages in acts of reconciliation, and by this I mean reconciliation on the cultural or national level, and not simply personal or inter-personal reconciliation. Although personal reconciliation is usually (possibly always) involved in the broader type, it is only in its direct relation to cultural reconciliation that it will concern me here.

So what is meant, then, by "reconciliation travel writing?" A working definition is in order. First of all, in my understanding of "travel writing" I shall follow the definition of the journal *Studies in Travel Writing* in saying that it is writing about travel that has actually taken place. We will leave aside the possible difficulties posed by problems of partial fictionalization, embellishment, and outright fabrication, and note simply that our definition excludes the treatment of travel in fiction. As for the category of reconciliation travel writing, I propose that it occurs when a traveler comes into contact with a culture, and members of that culture, that historically has been either harmed or oppressed by his or her own culture, or else seen as its enemy, and where a deeper understanding, friendship, and/or forgiveness is sought through an attitude of contrition. This can simply be an attitude of contrition on behalf on one's culture: it is not necessary that the writer feel or accept personal responsibility for historical crimes or enmities, simply that she feel sorry that her society has committed them. Most writing I have found that fits this definition has been conscious of its search for reconciliation, although I suppose it need not be. Furthermore, and importantly, for a work to be judged an example of this category of writing I do not deem it necessary that some kind of objectively

[4] Look for Young's article on Steven Meucke's work, particularly *Reading the Country: Introduction to Nomadology* (co-authored by Meucke, Krim Benterrak, and Paddy Roe), forthcoming in Paul Smethurst and Julia Keuhn, editors, *Mobilis in Mobile*.

demonstrable reconciliation is actually achieved. The fact that it is sought is sufficient to place the work in this category.[5]

One of the clearest early examples of such writing can be seen in the work of Colin Thubron, who, in his travels in the Soviet Union and communist China in the 1980s explicitly sought reconciliation with the cold war enemies of his own society.[6] Recently the idea has occurred frequently in Australian travel writing, started perhaps by Robyn Davidson's best-selling *Tracks*, wherein she comes face to face with Aboriginal people and their problems and also draws parallels between these and the gender issues she has faced in Australian society. Her work may have influenced Bruce Chatwin's *Songlines*, a partially fictionalized re-telling of several Australian journeys of his own among the Aboriginals, as well as Marlo Morgan's infamous *Mutant Message Down Under*, the best-selling new-age attempt at a particularly spiritual form of reconciliation that since has been revealed as wholly fictional. Stephen Muecke's work on Aboriginal Australians also uses travel narrative along with photography, ethnography, and the re-telling of folk tales.

RECONCILIATION TRAVEL IN JAPAN

I first came to consider the category of reconciliation in regard to travel media in Japan in connection with travel television programming. While working on an essay on NHK BS-2's long-running *Sekai: wa ga kokoro no tabi* (The World Journey of My Heart), I noticed that a remarkable number of the shows dealt with travel related to war-time memories on the Asian continent.[7] This surprised me, as it is rare to see

[5] I am not completely sure what it would mean for such literature to succeed. I think that the personal satisfaction of the narrator—the fulfillment of his or her quest—would not be sufficient to make a work of reconciliation writing successful. I am inclined to think that success as literature would necessitate that the book's audience come to understand the need for reconciliation and would, through reading, come to a more open position towards the maligned culture. This would then be detached from the literary question of whether or not the author as narrator achieves satisfactory reconciliation. I understand that this is a very political position.

[6] See specifically *Among the Russians* (1983), and *Behind the Wall: A Journey through China* (1987). The opening of the former gives a particularly strong sense of Thubron's search for reconciliation.

[7] This show ran on satellite television from 1993–2003; a total of 463 shows where produced. Each week, a different personality (writer, artist, actor, intellectual) visited an overseas location that held some special meaning for him or her. For more, see my essay "My Journey and Home Stay in the World: Travel Programming and Contemporary Japanese Culture," forthcoming in Paul Smethurst and Steve Clark, eds., *Excursions*.

such discussions in the Japanese media outside of the end of the war memorials aired every August. Of the slightly more than 100 *World Journey* shows that I surveyed, almost ten percent of the shows featured a person returning to the Asian continent to relive or reconsider a wartime experience.

There was an interesting dichotomy in these shows. In those wherein the traveler was ethnic Japanese (in a surprising number of the shows the traveler was actually a *zainichi* Korean or Chinese), it was usually the Japanese traveler or his family that were portrayed as the victims, and there the purpose of the trip was more like nostalgia, mourning, or the release of pent-up grief than any kind of reconciliation. As might be expected, those trips undertaken by non-Japanese tended to focus more on the plight of the people who had been colonized.[8]

I then tried to find an attitude of reconciliation in Japanese travel writing related to the former colonies in Asia.[9] I noticed a passage in Hotta Akio's travel manga *Ajia no diipu na arukikata* (Asian Deep Walking), wherein the narrator, traveling in Myanmar, encounters natives who are opposed to him as a Japanese and briefly explain their war experiences to him. The narrator then becomes reflective and apologetic. Here was a passage of reconciliation writing in the midst of a narrative that for the most part simply upheld common Japanese stereotypes about Asia.

THE GREAT JAPANESE EMPIRE AS SEEN BY NISHIMUTA YASUSHI

About this time I noticed a work on this theme that seemed to be selling quite well and garnishing notice in Japan, Nishimuta Yasushi's *Boku no mita 'dai nippon teikoku': osowaranakatta rekishi to deau tabi* (The 'Great Japanese Empire' that I Saw: Travels Meeting a History I was Never Taught). The catchy title immediately drew me to it.

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[8] This should come as no surprise, as the overwhelming Japanese view of the war in the mass-media is to portray the Japanese simply as victims. Of course the most frequent depictions are of the atomic bombings, and the carpet bombings of Tokyo by the Americans. There is also much coverage, though, of the Japanese who were trapped or captured in Manchuria by the Soviet Army, and the sufferings that they had to endure. In 1995, NHK co-produced with Chinese television a very popular season-long drama dealing with this issue, *Daichi no ko* 大地の子 (Child of the Earth) which gained much attention and critical acclaim.

[9] Thanks to Tim Youngs for first introducing me to the concept. In the *Mobilis in Mobile* travel writing conference in Hong Kong in July 2005 where I presented on Japanese travel T.V., Tim discussed the concept in relation to Stephen Meuck's writing on Australia.

The theme of this work is the author's travels throughout the former Japanese empire in search of the "*ashiato*" (footprints) of Japan that were left behind. After seeing a *torii* gate and meeting people who could speak Japanese in Sakhalin, this travel writer in his 30s did a little research on the former Japanese empire and was shocked to see just how big it had once been. He decided then to make a journey to as many parts of it as possible, looking for these "footprints" (Nishimuta, p. 18–19). My hopes that this popular new travel book might actually have something new and interesting to say were disappointed by the third page, where, as a result of seeing this *torii*, a super-Japanese symbol that he had heretofore thought existed only in the homeland, Nishimuta is led to feel not only that he did not really know enough about his own country, but to "even get the feeling of something that could not adequately be explained by the single word 'invasion' that we had been taught" (*bokutachi ga oshierareteki ta 'shinryaku' to iu tatta hitokoto no kotoba dake de wa warikiru koto no dekinai mono wo kanji mo shita no da*) (ibid. p. 19). This immediately brought to mind the textbook controversy that began in 1982, where it was claimed that the Japanese Ministry of Education had allowed the term *shinryaku* (invasion) to be changed to *shinshutsu* (advance) in history textbooks teaching about the Japanese occupation of China. Had Nishimuta, born in 1970 and thus a junior high school student at the time that this controversy broke out, really been taught just "the single word 'invasion?'" Could he as a writer be unaware of the layers of meaning contained in this statement? Furthermore, could it really be possible that the mere existence of a *torii* in Sakhalin caused him to doubt everything he had been taught? What could this gate alone have to say about the empire? Was there not a hidden agenda in these words of his? I began to expect that I was in for a work of historical revisionism.

To sum it up, Nishimuta's work is a tiresome account of all the Japanese things and Japanese-speaking people he encounters in Sakhalin, Taiwan, both Koreas, northeastern China, and Micronesia. It includes an infantile tally of the pro-Japanese (*shin-nichi*) people and things he encounters versus the anti-Japanese (*han-nichi*), and he concludes almost at the beginning that the pro- far outnumber the anti-, and that this complicates any ethical or historical judgments about Japan's colonial aggression, the facts of which he never denies, although making light of the cruel aspects, emphasizing the material progress (modern capitalism) that Japan helped bring about in the colonies, and criticizing the "anti" faction for focusing only on negative aspects in order to advance their own political ends. He concludes that the single word "invasion" is too

simple to explain what happened, and the post-war education system is most to blame for not teaching all the good things that Japan did.

There are many problems with this book, not the least of which are a over-blown descriptive style and a nagging persistence to give historical interpretations as if they were indisputable facts, with no references to any kind of evidence at all. Nishimuta's tendency to pass judgments upon the Japanese ability of each person he meets (perfect pronunciation, strange accent, not standard Japanese, hard to understand, beginners'-level, military-style Japanese) is self-righteous and irritating, and shows him in something like the role of a conqueror himself, a linguistic cultural imperialist. Even more annoying and problematic is the author's unending use of phrases like "it would seem" (*rashii*) or "so I am told" (*da sou da, to iu*), in what are meant to be his interpretations of the things he encounters on this trip.

Predictably, Nishimuta's overseas travels end on Palau. After visiting the tunnels on Palau where 10,000 Japanese soldiers fought to the death and were "crushed like jewels" (*gyokusai*) by an overwhelming American force, and then paying his respect to their spirit of Bushido, he finally reaches the site on Tinian where two B-29s took off on their runs to drop "Little Boy" on Hiroshima and "Fat Man" on Nagasaki. Not only is the Japanese Empire justified, the "fight to the death even though there is no chance of winning" *gyokusai* mentality of the soldiers praised, but the evil committed by the Americans will also in the end be highlighted, leading us to feel just how unjust the outcome of the Pacific War really was. The wrong side, with the wrong spirit, won in the end.

The epilogue of the book takes us to Yasukuni Shrine, that ever-present reminder both of the failure of the Japanese government to reconcile with her former enemies and of the tensions that still survive in Japanese society in regard to these matters. Nishimuta ends his story with an all-out embrace of Yasukuni and the respect it pays to those who died for their country.[10]

Having given these general criticisms of the book, I wish below to analyze this work based not on the correctness of its historical claims regarding the former Japanese empire or the Pacific War, but to analyze the work as travel literature, dissecting it using some of the critical tools that I have learned from recent research on Anglophone travel writing.

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[10] This leads me to wonder whether Nishimuta's first name, Yasushi, is not actually a pen name taken in honor of the shrine, which starts with the same character 靖.

GREENBLATT: COLUMBUS AND THE CREATION OF MEANING

In regard to advancing the study of Japanese travel writing and the suggestions that I made above, of interest here are literary devices used by Nishimuta that have been pointed out as persistent motifs in Imperial-era European travel writing. He often employs devices that have already been debunked by Western scholars like Mary Louise Pratt and Steven Greenblatt.

In *Marvelous Possessions*, Greenblatt makes a careful analysis of the portions of the diaries of Christopher Columbus where he first encounters Native Americans. Greenblatt convincingly shows how Columbus conveniently interpreted the words and actions of the chief to his own benefit, understanding that the chief was giving him free reign of his islands, when in fact he simply had no idea what was being said or what the actions signified. There was of course at that time no one who could understand both languages and act as interpreter, so it is natural that Columbus had to try to construct the chief's meaning, especially in his report to the Spanish King. What Greenblatt finds interesting is the manner in which Columbus arbitrarily constructs a meaning that is both completely beneficial to him and wholly disastrous to the natives, a meaning that the chief could not possibly have intended.

A fundamentally similar strategy is evident in Nishimuta, both in cases where he cannot achieve adequate communication with the people he meets on account of language barriers and also in cases where he is able to communicate in Japanese but his informants choose not to reveal the facts he wants. In both cases, Nishimuta simply constructs the meaning that he wishes to convey. For example, in Sakhalin, when he meets a Japanese woman who has lived there since before the war, he finds out that although she could have returned to Japan after the war she did not, because she had a Korean husband by that time, and children. She merely tells him those facts, but he goes on to conclude that she was forced to stay there against her will (*yogi nakusareta*) and would rather be home in Japan. The woman has said nothing of the kind. She has visited Japan, and while she says that she enjoyed her visits very much, she obviously made no attempt to stay there. He simplistically assumes that no native Japanese could ever willingly choose to live her life outside of the homeland (ibid. pp. 60–1).

In another place, while examining a tunnel that the Japanese built in southern Korea, Nishimuta encounters an old man who begins screaming at him when he understands that Nishimuta is Japanese. The man is portrayed as a raving lunatic, screaming in Korean at him for minutes on

end, and then finally relaxing, reconciling himself to Nishimuta, and going away relieved. All this ranting and raving has brought about a catharsis for the old man, who had problems dealing with his past. This past is never clearly known, for the man says nothing in Japanese, and Nishimuta, although he keeps dropping words of Korean in the text, does not understand the language. Nevertheless, he constructs this man's history and present psychological state: The man seems to have been brought to Japan against his will and to have been made to work at forced labor, probably in a cave. There he was beaten and abused, and saw many of his colleagues die. He somehow made it back to Korea after the war, but has been plagued by his memories of the ill-treatment ever since.

Once he gets this off his chest to the uncomprehending young Japanese, his anger subsides and he makes friends with Nishimuta. The conclusion that is explicitly stated is that Nishimuta can be very helpful to his country and its international relations if he just goes around Korea letting resentful people blow off steam at him as a Japanese. It is part of Korean culture, he claims, to get angry and blow off steam like this and then feel better about things immediately afterwards. This he is happy to do for his country. We leave the scene with no clue of what the man really said, only Nishimuta's juvenile and self-righteous interpretation of the incident (ibid. pp. 154–8).

Even more revealing is an encounter that Nishimuta has with a group of Taiwanese students he meets traveling on small islands surrounding Taiwan. Before relating their pro-Japanese discussion, he admits that "it was often irritatingly difficult to understand, but the conversation took place in English, a few odd words of Chinese, and written characters" (*umaku tsūjinakute modokashii omoi mo shita ga, kaiwa wa eigo to katakoto no chūgokugo to hitsudan de okonowareta*). The point here is that when his subjects will not come right out and make pro-Japanese comments (he does encounter many who do), Nishimuta will certainly find such meanings somewhere in their words. Even should he, like Columbus, fail to comprehend, a positive meaning will be forthcoming.

It is at times inescapable that all of us, in dealing with others, project our own interpretations upon their words and actions, but as Greenblatt showed, in travel writing this device has historically been tied to all kinds of imperialist projects. Nishimuta is certainly not special in that he does this, but it is revealing that contemporary Japanese post-colonial (if only in the literal sense) travel writing employs the same tactics, to create similar meanings, as did early modern European pre-colonial travel writing. It shows that the world of travel writing in Japan, at least in

terms of practice, has still not learned many of the lessons that the rest of the world has in regard to such writing.

PRATT'S ANTI-CONQUEST NARRATIVE

Another tactic common in European literature of expansion that we find expertly employed in Nishimuta is the anti-conquest narrative (of course, we must admit that it appears in a modified form, as Nishimuta is involved in no physical conquest). In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt discussions this notion, wherein the conqueror or colonizer uses the narrative tactic of denying any will to conquer or take, and even at times constructs himself as the victim, while all the while contributing to the onward expansion of the metropolitan powers and the oppression of those at the margins. Although this too is a tactic of which any educated reader of travel writing is perfectly aware, Nishimuta makes it a cornerstone of his work. Several times, beginning in the second chapter and continuing right through to the postscript, Nishimuta makes the claim that he is apolitical, and that he came on his journey without any pre-conceived agenda or feelings about Japan's historical relationship with Asia:

> I think I'm a person with no particular political leanings. I guess it's because I'm a Japanese, but I just feel happy when I can get a glimpse of 'Japan' here and there, and when I can communicate in Japanese in some unexpected place. (Ibid., p. 84)

In what might be seen as a mixture of the two strategies mentioned above, in the following episode he not only takes an anti-conquest stance, but also gives his own arbitrary interpretation against all available information in regard to the Hanazono Shrine in Taiwan. There, he is happy to find that parts of this shrine have remained, even after the Kuomintang's attempts to erase all traces of Japanese colonialism.

> The special atmosphere of a Shinto Shrine was already gone, but I felt happy that they had left it here in this close-to-complete form. There is no political meaning in this. Just my feelings as one Japanese. (Ibid., p. 99)

This in spite of the fact that the Taiwanese have turned this colonial symbol into a monument for those who died fighting the Japanese. While

Nishimuta recognizes and even mentions this point, the all-too-obvious conclusions to which this fact should lead are not made.

Finally, at Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, the day commemorating the end of the Pacific War and the unconditional surrender of Japan, he says a little prayer, late though it may be, for all the people who suffered on account of the Japanese empire. Here he claims that this is "unrelated to "right" or "left." A sense of Mourning for those people sacrificed by this war was really there in my heart" (ibid., p. 396).

As in the previous examples, this sounds very nice, but can a mere claim to apoliticality constitute its own reality? The fact is that people who hold the views that Nishimuta is expounding throughout this book do have a political orientation, by the very nature of those views. It is called "*uyoku*"—the nationalistic Japanese right wing. Framing this otherwise, as has been done throughout the work, is either an act of nearly unfathomable ignorance and naiveté, or a carefully planned work of deception.

OTHER LOGICAL FLAWS

We find numerous other logical jumps and inversions in the work. When Nishimuta finally encounters people in Taiwan who dislike and refuse to deal with him as a Japanese, he concludes, without any other evidence, that they must be people who immigrated from mainland China after the war, since, well, all Taiwanese people like Japan (ibid., p. 127).

We find other breakdowns in logic, such as when he concludes that Taiwanese must be much more pro-Japan than he initially expected, because a register girl in a small town shop says "sayonara" to him as he leaves. She can otherwise speak no Japanese (ibid., p. 84).

I could go on and on giving examples of twisted logic and strained interpretations. What we have here is a long line of illogically-drawn conclusions based upon insufficient evidence and arbitrary interpretations. The basic point is that through his travels, Nishimuta concludes that there are so many people in Asia who love Japan and recognize the good things that his country did for them that the Imperial period cannot really be described simply as an invasion. The problem is with the educational system in Japan which teaches only the bad things that the country did and ignores the good things.

"GREAT JAPANESE EMPIRE" AS RECONCILIATION LITERATURE

Let's return to the issue of reconciliation. Does *Boku no mita 'dai nippon teikoku'* qualify as reconciliation travel writing? If so, does it

succeed and how? Following the definition I gave above, we do see travels within historically subjugated lands wherein the narrator tries to understand the culture and become friends with the people there. Is there, however, any act of apology or feeling of contrition? There are several points in the book where Nishimuta seems contrite when faced with people who in the past had suffered greatly at the hands of the Japanese.

This first happens in Sakhalin, where he meets a Korean man who was brought there as a forced laborer by the Japanese, and could not go back home after the war on account of the conflict between the North and South. When hearing the old man's tale, he feels a sense of guilt (*boku wa nandaka mōshiwake nai yō na kimochi ni natteita*), and brings himself to speak words of sympathy, if not quite apology to the man, "If our grandfathers' generation had not brought you along, you probably wouldn't be here. Sorry." (*bokutachi no ojiisan no sedai ga tsurete konakattara, ojiisan mo koko ni inakatta deshō. Suimasendeshita*). Immediately after he comes closest to an apology—and here the responsibility is with "our grandfathers" and his slangy "*suimasen"* is spoken almost as if to purposefully erase any sense of respect it might contain—he is conveniently told by the old man that the past is the past, so he can absolve himself of all sense of guilt and responsibility. He is left with nothing to do "but curse the inhumanity of history" (*rekishi no hijō wo norou igai ni nani mo dekinakatta* (ibid. p. 53–4).

In another example, when visiting a small island off the coast of Taiwan, he sees the lifestyle of the people, which is very simple but seems to have been corrupted by alcohol and tobacco, and reflects that this island might have been better off if neither Japanese nor Chinese had ever come bringing modern life. Nothing further is made of this point, however, and the implication made throughout the chapter is that the Chinese eventually did come, and did worse things than the Japanese ever did, and that therefore the Japanese were justified (ibid., p.132).

In his trip to Korea, the author encounters several people who are anti-Japanese and some who personally suffered under Japanese rule. After saying that he understands that Koreans have come to reject Japan after suffering its harsh rule, he then goes on to reflect that it is nothing short of miraculous in these circumstances that even small portions of the Japanese-built shrine are still standing there! With his cavalier attitude towards both their past sufferings and their present hatred Nishimuta shows here that he is absolutely uncontrite and unconcerned with reconciling himself to their standpoint. All he can say is what good luck it was that these Japanese "footprints" have survived (ibid., pp.163–4).

What we have here is really inverted reconciliation literature. The people of the ex-colonies are shown reconciling (or wanting to reconcile) themselves to their former master, Japan, now ironically shown in the form of this young backpacking, scooter-riding boy who goes around looking for people who speak Japanese so he can pass judgment on their ability and pick through their conversations looking for anything that fits his project. This is not post-colonialist literature—it is neo-imperialist literature. The conclusion is that the Asians need to reconcile themselves to all the ways in which Japan has benefited them, and that they and the Japanese who are responsible for teaching him wrongly about the empire should stop complaining and admit the truth. Nothing in Taiwan, for example, is as good as what the Japanese did there. The Kuomintang just made things worse than the Chinese who originally invaded the island. The same is true in Sakhalin in regard to the Russians. They are a bunch of Europeans (read: whites) living thousands of kilometers away in Moscow who never cared about the fates of these East Asian (read: yellow) peoples, peoples who really should be part of an Asian nation. The racist undertones of the work are all too evident.

THE JAPANESE SPIRIT

Japanese cultural and technological superiority is assumed, but not only did Japan have to bring modern government and technology to places like Taiwan and Korea, they also brought the Japanese spirit (*nihon seishin*). To him, this is an anti-individualistic mentality that recognizes the other person and the group. Whenever he sees such a mentality in an Asian person, Nishimuta assumes that this must have been taught to him by his parents, who would have been educated in the Japanese education system and who only thus would have learned things like politeness, kindness, group consciousness, selflessness—from the Japanese. They speak the Japanese language, which they learned from the Japanese, so they must have learned these values as well. Not only does Nishimuta fail to recognize that the argument can just as easily be turned on its head, that these values, so often recognized as Confucian, originally came to Japan from China and Korea, but by affirming these so-called traditional Japanese values, he puts himself into a contradictory position without even realizing it. One "traditional" value in Japan has been to recognize one's responsibility or guilt, and even that of one's ancestors, as part of oneself, and to repay that burden throughout one's life. Nishimuta, like many in the Japanese government today who complain like he does about the loud complaints of Korea and China, wants to say that whatever bad things might have happened have nothing

to do with him and his present-day Japan, and he wants his readers to agree. He is touting the greatness of the Japanese Spirit while going against a major historical aspect of it.

RECONCILIATION TRAVEL IN ASIA

Although Nishimuta's work is more correctly categorized as neo-imperialist travel writing than reconciliation travel writing, I have found other works which, while not focusing completely on travel, clearly aim at a kind of reconciliation between Japan and her former colonies. I would like to briefly introduce two of these works here, in order to contrast them with Nishimuta's work.[11] Both works were written by women, both published in 2002, both focused upon China, and both present what might be called a classic post-war Japanese liberal-pacifist political stance: they openly admit that Japan was the transgressor in Asia and the Pacific War, and are deeply apologetic on that point.

Kurahashi Ayako's rather clumsily titled *What My Secret Police Father Left Behind: Father and Daughter, A Journey facing Pain in the Heart* is part memoir, part psychological investigation, and part travel diary from a daughter who is seeking to unearth the crimes her father may have committed during wartime, following his own last requests. Only a small section of the book is dedicated to travel, so we might resist labeling it "travel writing." The term "*tabi*" in the title obviously refers more to the inner journey towards understanding that the daughter takes than to her actual travels in northeastern China.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Kurahashi is apologetic over anything her father might have done and seeks reconciliation with any Chinese he might have injured. In this, her work is reconciliatory on personal levels as well as cultural. That is in fact the major fault of the work: it is far too personal, far too detailed in relating her own psychological issues connected to what her father might or might not have done in wartime. The book thus ends up appearing more like a therapy journal than a work of travel writing, and the strong focus on Kurahashi's personal issues tends to obscure and over-sentimentalize the political issues involved.

Far different in style, though similar in political stance is *A Sad Soldier of the Sino-Japanese War: A Journey Tracking Father's Diary*, by Katō Katsuko. This work is far more interesting as literature, mixing the author's reading of her dead father's war diary, her historical research

[11] Each of these works certainly deserves a much fuller treatment, but space constraints limit me to very brief comments on each of them.

concerning events described in it, her own political activities in Japan, and her travels in China tracing her father's footsteps. Although Katō's attempt to draw her own political activism and the opposition she meets in parallel with the atmosphere in wartime Japan seems a bit of a stretch, it is a literary tool that makes the reader wonder just how much things have really changed. By doing thorough historical research into the events of her father's wartime life, she also surpasses Kurahashi's more simplistic diary-like style and Nishimuta's "so I am told" approach. Katō's writing, however, is dry, rather academic, and difficult to penetrate. This is seen most clearly in the portions written on her travels in China, which, like the diaries of traveling monks of yore, is nearly written in *kanbun*, with very few Japanese characters to be seen and no trace of Japanese grammar.

It is thus not at all surprising that Nishimuta's has proven to be by far the most popular of these works. While the others saw just one printing, *"The Great Japanese Empire" that I Saw* sold over 30,000 copies by the time of writing (June 2006), and it was still selling. In fact, a companion volume was released in February, 2006, describing this same trip in photography: *Reading Through Photos: The "Great Japanese Empire" that I Saw*.

There are literary reasons for Nishimuta's popularity. The book's cover is designed much like a manga, with a bright *hinomaru* flag and comic book fonts on the cover. It is also written in a colloquial style, one which I found extremely childish but which is easy to read and might be appealing to people who have grown up reading manga. If Katō's and Kurahashi's works were aimed, in their titles and literary styles, at older, well-educated liberals, then Nishimuta's book seemed aimed at the other end of the spectrum: younger, less-well-read people who wanted to feel proud of their country. This marketing has indeed worked. In reading several reviews of the book on the internet, positive emotional responses were most evident, and the lack of theoretical argument or reference of other literature was also outstanding.

What we have here is a work of travel writing written for people who usually do not travel much abroad, and who probably should not. It is a piece of propaganda that skillfully uses several well-known and clichéd literary devices to drive its emotional point home. The Japanese travel reading public deserves more, which brings me back to my opening claims. The literature and media of travel in contemporary Japan has been ignored by political thinkers for too long. Other voices need to be heard besides those which are merely aesthetic and the others which still fail to realize that we are in a post-colonial age.

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