

書評

Naoto Sudo, *Nanyo-Orientalism:
Japanese Representations of the Pacific*

(New York: Cambria Press, 2010)

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Naoto Sudo's *Nanyo-Orientalism: Japanese Representations of the Pacific* is a fascinating and informative addition to the field of colonial/postcolonial studies, providing a fresh perspective to theory that (in English-language terms, certainly) has all too often concentrated solely on British and American hegemonic relationships with the South Pacific region. The author clearly delineates the geographical region in question to assess Japan's problematic relationship with the Pacific Islands in light of Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978). The Korean scholar, Kang Sang-jung's reinterpretation of Japanese Orientalism, in which Kang argues that Japanese textual interpretations of Micronesia reflect "the simultaneous operation of double desires: the desire to avoid Western territorial ambition directed at Japan and the desire to use Orientalism's hegemonic power over other Asian/Pacific regions",¹⁾ also forms a touchstone for Sudo's theoretical framework. The earlier literature of *Nanyo-Orientalism*, the author proposes, implies a dual moral imperative, encapsulating as it often does the propagandistic desire to "save" indigenous culture from itself through tying it to Japanese protection, while also seeking to redress the perceived wrongs of Western imperialism and colonization, a "primordial chaos [which must] be reclaimed from or liberated from Western rules by the Japanese".²⁾

Sudo examines both colonial and postcolonial periods, as well as the decolonizing processes represented in more contemporary texts, to explore textual representations of identity formation on the micro and macro scales of consciousness at national and individual levels and in relation to concepts of otherness. As such, the analysis acknowledges the diversity of the islands in Oceania but unites them through their relationship with – and reaction to – the historical forces of imperialism from both sides of the Pacific Rim and in doing so highlights the constant and fluid evolution of identity: an identity that is invariably formed in relation to manifest oppression(s) and segregation(s) but which retains a fluidity that is symbolized by the mutating and transforming ocean itself.

For Japanese writers in the 1930s such as Shimada Keizo, the islands of the South Seas appear to have existed as much in the imagination as in reality, an approach described by

¹⁾ Kang, Sang-jung. In Naoto Sudo, *Nanyo-Orientalism: Japanese Representations of the Pacific* (New York: Cambria Press, 2010), 3.

²⁾ Sudo, *Nanyo-Orientalism*, 5.

Yano Toru as the “Boken Dankichi syndrome”. During this period, the South Pacific region encapsulates a Japanese desire for idealized colonization: the attempt to mold indigenous subjects as one step removed from the “noble savage” concept envisions them becoming law-abiding citizens who remain loyal to the Japanese social structure and ethos while never being afforded actual “Japanese” status themselves. This was a site then, both real and imagined, in which to redress the perceived past mistakes of Japanese colonization in East Asia, evidenced for example in the work of the folklorist, Yanagita Kunio, while also serving the function of redressing the wrongs of the white colonizer both in Micronesia itself and elsewhere. Versions of “Shunkan” written by Kurata Hyakuzo, Kikuchi Kan, and Akutagawa Ryunosuke in the 1920s reinforce this point through didactic morality tales that emphasize an “appropriate” colonizing behavior and methodology that is portrayed as, with apologies to Kipling, the Japanese man’s burden. Nakajima Atsushi’s “Fufu” (1942), however, provides the counterpoint to such attitudes during this period. Postcolonial in its ramifications, it resists the predominant colonial discourse in its reversal of the traditional movement from “civilized” to “uncivilized” seen in many texts, but still locates itself within the parameters of orientalism through its “exoticization” (and, on occasions, “eroticization”) of the native.

U.S. atomic testing is overtly referenced in Japanese cinema of the 1950s, most particularly through *Godzilla* (1954) which may be read, as Sudo explains, in anti-imperialist terms but which conversely represents Japanese colonialism as noble in its ideals in comparison to Western acts of aggression. Stories such as Miura Shumon’s “Shoko” (1957), depict Japanese not in the role of aggressors but as victims, conveniently ignoring many of the transgressions against local inhabitants, while the same author’s “Ponape-to” (1957) reimagines Western colonization in terms of its effects on indigenous people. Japanese cinema from the late 1950s played a similar role in historical revisionism through further *Godzilla* films, reflecting the sentiments of earlier texts such as the cartoon story “Dankichi the adventurous”, first published between 1933 and 1939, but republished in 1967.

As Sudo notes, issues surrounding decolonization, but also neo-colonial desires, re-emerge in novels such as Tanaka Koji’s *The Small Devine Islands* (1981), Ikezawa Natsuki’s *The Stratosphere on a Summer Morning* (1984) and Macias Gilly’s *Downfall* (1993) – which articulates and inverts the orientalist trope of centre and periphery – and Kobayashi Nobuhiko’s *The Hottest Island in the World* (1991). Ikezawa’s 1984 novel, as one such example of coded neocolonialism, portrays resistance to Americanization while reinforcing the supposed “uniqueness” of Japanese identity in juxtaposition to the “otherness” of Micronesia. Yet despite these negative portrayals of Western influence, the American relationship is also represented in terms of enlightenment and protection, underlining the conflicted Japanese attitudes to the West in many novels of the period which, as Sudo correctly asserts, “unwittingly show Japanese writers’ difficulties in depicting the (distant) other as resisting conventional colonialist depictions”.³⁾

³⁾ Ibid., 73.

Sudo's "dialogue" between texts by Nakajima Atsushi and Albert Wendt provides further fertile ground for investigating colonization, transnationalism and alienation, and their effects on constructs of identity. Through brief comparative analyses of other colonial narratives, he notes the inherent romanticism in many earlier Western and Japanese texts, and the impact of colonial education on indigenous people, a theme common to colonial/postcolonial literature. But Nakajima, as Sudo posits, moves away from traditional critiques of colonial methodology so as to denigrate the act of colonialism in itself, while Wendt's depiction of a faceless Japan attempts to distance the author from fixed national identities, and seeks to dismantle cultural and national stereotypes by locating not only points of connection in this fluid region of the Pacific but also, conversely, to portray the "ambiguous, alienated self".⁴⁾

Japanese diasporic identities and attitudes to colonization and neo-colonization are also examined in contemporary Hawaiian literature (Haunani-Kay Trask and O.A. Bushell are two such examples). Shifts in the representation of Japanese diasporic identity took place in the 1980s and 1990s through Gary Pak's and Chris McKinney's focus on Japanese imperialism and its effect on indigenous peoples in the South Pacific, and also through investigations of Japanese postcolonial consciousness by Japanese-Hawaiian writers such as Jessica Saiki, Marie Hara, Juliet Kono, Lois-Ann Yamanaka, and Milton Murayama. Pak depicts the Japanese through the binary of aggressor/victim while many of the other writers mentioned here deal with issues of gender consciousness and generational difference. Notably, and as an exception to the rule, *Marquita* (1982, 1986), by Chris Perez Howard, looks not only at power relations between the U.S. and Micronesia, but also at the period of Japanese occupation. Its critique of Japanese imperialist policies of assimilation and segregation is an indictment of colonial policies but also of false nostalgia. With reference to a range of textual evidence, Sudo argues convincingly that Nanyo texts emanating from Japan may often be seen to be looking back, perhaps reactively, while texts emanating from the islands themselves – most particularly Hawaii – look forward, proactively seeking new identities.

Naoto Sudo's analysis of the complex and overlapping colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial histories that tie Japan, the United States and Micronesia over the last hundred years is a thorough and thought-provoking book which sheds new light on Japanese imperialistic and colonizing motivations in the region through the established framework of Saidian theory. Though the book would have been best served by a unifying conclusion, it nevertheless provides a lucid and engaging analysis of a diverse range of Nanyo literature and gives the reader new insights into the fraught positioning of the South Pacific Islands, whose peoples and cultures were often overwhelmed by the competing colonial imperatives and military strategies of both Japan and the United States throughout the 20th century.

⁴⁾ Ibid., 130.