



Great Power Strategy in Asia: Empire, culture and trade, 1905-2005, by Jonathan Bailey, Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007, vii + 312 pp., ISBN: 0-415-40458-4.

It is no simple feat to examine 100 years of history in a mere 227 pages of text, but this is the task that Jonathan Bailey, a retired British Army major general sets out to accomplish in his latest monograph. However, unlike his previous two books, this most recent publication does not limit itself to the discipline of military history as it ambitiously attempts to encompass a theme of empire, culture and trade within the geographic context of Asia.

Bailey clearly recognizes the significance of the Russo-Japanese War – a war which some scholars have aptly referred to as World War Zero – as a major event of the 20th century as well as a critical turning point in the international relations of East Asia. Consisting of 12 chapters divided into three parts, the book first examines the Russo-Japanese War in a geopolitical as well as military context. In the second section, a 35 year perspective on the Japanese “grand strategy” from Port Arthur (*Ryojun*) to Pearl Harbor is provided. In the final section, Bailey examines the shifting power strategy in Asia in what he refers to as “imperial tectonics.” The section provided an overarching macro-perspective that covers a 100 year time span and carries the book into the post-9/11 period. Although not reflected in the subtitle, race is also a recurring theme throughout the book which provides an additional dimension when examining the relationship between East and West.

Despite the efforts of the author, after reading the book one is still left with the following question: what was the great power strategy in Asia? As the title even indicates, the ultimate aim of the book is ambiguous from the onset and this lack of a clear purpose leaves an indelible mark on the final product. The resulting tome is a collage of various themes that fails to provide a consistent narrative and a common unifying thread. Moreover, the writing is so muddled with consistent switching back and forth between themes, it leaves the reader with the impression that he/she is in the midst of a chaotic and confused battlefield. Although the omission of a coherent central topic is in itself a serious flaw which undercuts the effectiveness of the book, this work also suffers from a lack of any serious synthesis of the subject matter on hand. Furthermore, the analyses when provided are sparse, shallow and superficial at best. It appears that Bailey’s primary interest, and perhaps *forte*, is in military tactics and the history of warfare as this is touched upon quite frequently. On the other hand, it is painfully apparent that the author does not possess even a basic knowledge of Japanese foreign policy. How else can one explain the omission of such key policy concepts at *Komura Gaiko* and *Shidehara Gaiko*, just to name a few. Not a single renovationist within the Japanese Foreign Office is mentioned in the book along with important “power strategy” policy makers such as Hirota Koki and Arita Hachiro.

Another serious flaw is that the book does not utilize any archival sources and the secondary materials referenced are all works published in English. But the reason why the book cannot be viewed as a serious academic tome does not hinge on this alone. The book is marred by the all too frequent errors of historical fact. To give a few examples, the Chinese Exclusion Act did not bar Chinese immigration for 60 years (p. 63); rather the act stipulated a “temporary suspension” of 10 years which was later extended by congress. In a similar vein, there is no



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such thing as a “California Alien Exclusion Act” (p. 67) as the Supreme Court decision in the *Passenger Cases* (1849) made it unconstitutional for states to enact immigration legislation. Also contrary to Bailey’s claim, President Wilson opposed the racial equality clause during the Paris Peace conference out of domestic political concerns (p. 68) and President Coolidge was clearly against the inclusion of the Japanese exclusion clause (Article 13c) into the Immigration Act of 1924 (p. 72). In addition to the abundance of such factual errors – if one were to list them all, they would be quite extensive – there are many instances where quotes are used out of context merely to support the author’s allegations. For these reasons, the book’s credibility is completely undermined.

Tosh Minohara

Tosh Minohara is professor of international history at the Graduate School of Law, Kobe University. Professor Minohara’s major publications include, *Hainichi iminho o nichibei kankei [The Japanese Exclusion Act and US-Japan Relations]* (Iwanami shoten, 2002) which was awarded the 2003 Shimizu Hiroshi Prize, and more recently, *Kariforniashu no hainichi undo to nichibei kankei [The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and U.S.-Japan Relations]* (Yuhikaku, 2006). His current research examines US-Japan diplomatic relations from Theodore Roosevelt/Elihu Root to Herbert Hoover/Henry Stimson. He is also interested in prewar Japanese signals intelligence.

Editor’s Comments

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