

BOOK REVIEW

Koji Nakashima 中島弘二 ed. *Teikoku Nihon to Shinrin: Kindai Higashi Ajia ni okeru Kankyo Hogo to Shigen Kaihatsu* 帝国日本と森林——近代東アジアにおける環境保護と資源開発 [The Japanese Empire and Forests: Conservation and Development of Forest Resource in Modern East Asia]. Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 2023, 388+14pp.

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While the centrality of Sustainable Development Goals in global policy circles has given growing attention to the preservation and conservation of “nature” around the world, the idea of “sustainability” of course has a long history. Numerous researchers have called attention to the intricate relation between European imperialism and environmental policy, showing that sustainable development, environmentalist thought, and imperialism have been tightly interwoven in the governance strategies, knowledge regimes and material networks of Western imperialist projects. In the East Asia region, such environmentalities were produced in tandem with the geographical expansion of Japanese imperialism, particularly from the 1920s to 1940s. If we accept that all ideas are embedded in deeply political and economic contexts, and that imperialist power in East Asia worked uniquely from that of the Western powers, we need then to understand how imperialism and environmentalism were interrelated in the context of East Asia.

The edited collection *The Japanese Empire and Forests: Conservation and Development of Forest Resource in Modern East Asia* traces the historical processes through which prewar Japanese forest ideologies and technologies imported from Europe in the Meiji period were deployed to produce “rich” forests through environmental conservation and resource development to enrich the resources of “Japan,” including “外地 *gaichi*” – the territories under Japanese imperial rule such as Taiwan, Korea, Sakhalin, Manchuria and parts of southeast Asia. The book narrates how the deployment of afforestation and conservation programs depended on each local context, meaning not simply such “physical” conditions as climate and soil, but also social conditions such as how local land use was situated in political economy.

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To bring the diversity of these projects to light, the book's eight chapters cover Hokkaido, Sakhalin, Manchuria, Taiwan, Korea and Southeast Asia. The seven authors are all Japanese academics who are members of the research group “帝国日本の林学者と植民地林業の研究” (Study of Foresters and Forestry of Colonies in Imperial Japan). The group has a wide range of expertise in environmental history, forestry politics, agricultural history, human geography, and museology. This interdisciplinary research group was originally formed by Koji Nakashima, one of the participants of the international workshop "Historical Studies on Japanese Imperial Sciences and its Network" held in 2014, who invited other participants to join the group and organised a research group funded by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science in 2015. Additional members have since joined and the research group has continued to be successful in obtaining research funding. In addition to group discussions and workshops, the members have also held sessions and symposia at various academic conferences, including the Association for East Asian Environmental History and the Association of Japanese Geographers, and the international workshop "Japanese Imperial Sciences and its Network.” They also co-organized the international workshop "Empire Forestry Networks and Knowledge Production” in 2018. I recall listening to a presentation of Nakashima's research at a symposium held at the 2021 Congress of the Association of Japanese Geographers, and being surprised by the rich content and sharp analytical perspective of his work. This book is the outcome of this series of research projects. The content of the book is divided into two parts and includes eight chapters in total, including an Introduction and Conclusion, and eleven brief columns which explain special topics and present interdisciplinary approaches to the relationship between Japanese imperialism and forestry management. This is very “thick” achievement in term of both volume and quality. As the book is written in Japanese, it seems valuable for non-native readers of the language to list the table of the contents of the book here in English.

Introduction: Why problematise the forestry of the Japan Empire?

Column: British Empire and Imperial Forestry

Part 1. An Overview of Imperial Forestry

Chapter 1. The Forest Management of the Japanese Empire: A Quantitative assessment based on statistical data

Column: 林政文庫 *Rinsei Bunko*: Archives and historical documents on agricultural and forestry administration

Chapter 2. The Japanese Empire from the Perspective of Land Cover

Column: Land Cover as depicted in 外邦図 *gaihozu* (maps produced by the Imperial Army)

Column: Slash-and-burn agriculture and modern forestry

Chapter 3. The Forests and Greening Projects of the Japan Empire

Column: The national land afforestation movement

Part 2. Forestry development and Conservation in Colonies and Ruled Regions of the Japanese Empire

Chapter 4. Imperial Forestry in Hokkaido and Sakhalin (*Karafuto*): from exclusion to cooperation

Column: The Lives of forestry workers

Chapter 5. Imperial Forestry in Manchuria

Column: Maps and reports of the Manchurian forest survey based on aerial photographs

Chapter 6. Imperial Forestry and Local People in Korea (*Chosen*)

Column: Korean vegetation as seen by travellers

Chapter 7. Taiwan and Imperial forestry: Afforestation, camphor, and scientific forestry

Column: Forestry experiment stations and botanical gardens

Chapter 8. Forest resource development in the Southeast Asia (*Nanpo*) and Imperial forestry

Column: Timber and tree species

Column: A brief discussion of scientific names

Conclusion: Looking Back at Japan's "Imperial Forestry"?

Column: Imperial forestry and India

Nakashima, the editor of the book, points out that the literature on the relationship between empire and environment has tended to focus on "Western" cases, and insists that by comparing the linkages between Western imperialism and environmentalism with those of Japanese imperialism, we can understand diverse forms of imperialism and diverse ways of relating to the environment. Japanese imperialism was characterized by a different geopolitical dimension from the West in its colonial expansion into neighbouring Asian regions. The uniqueness of Japanese imperialism created a network of colonial science and resource use through environmental interactions between the centre (mainland) and the periphery (colonies and dominions) differently from those of the West. The book examines in particular how forest management and "resourcing" forests for empire was conducted in Japan's main islands, colonies and controlled areas. Although these areas under Japanese imperialist control had diverse environmental conditions, ranging from subarctic to tropical, the forest management and resourcing in these areas were conducted in close relationship with the forestry policies of mainland Japan. Moreover, in the total war system of the early 1930s, forest resource policies were increasingly incorporated into the mobilization of resources to continue the war. Considering this specificity of geographical and geopolitical condition of Japan's imperialism, Nakashima sets out two goals in the book's introduction. The first is to elucidate the development and conservation of forests in East and Southeast Asia in relation to the geopolitical framework of the Japanese empire. The other is to reconsider the debate on "empire and environment"

centred on Western imperialism in the context of Japanese imperialism. To achieve these goals, the first part of the book, consisting of three chapters, overviews both the physical and social conditions of Japan's main islands and oversea territories through analysis of statistics, maps and discourse, while the second part, consisting of five chapters, examines each area in greater depth.

It is impossible to address Imperial Japan's forest development in all controlled areas in this review due to word count limitations. Since this journal focuses on the history of science in Korea, I will focus mainly on forestry undertaken in Korea.

Chapter 1 highlights a unique contradiction of Japan's imperial forestry through analysis of static data: in the forest management of Imperial Japan, not only did the colonies supply timber to the main island of Japan, but the main islands also supplied timber to the colonies. In Japanese imperialism, particularly between 1921 and 1937, while Sakhalin and Hokkaido were exporters, Taiwan and Korea were net timber importers. Although the forest area of Taiwan and Korea was increasing through Japanese forestry management, internal timber supplies fell short due to the type of tree species and economic expansion. Subtropical Taiwan needed to import large amounts of conifers that were used for timber. Although a reasonable amount of demand could be met within the Korean peninsula, the volume of import gradually increased due to the expansion of economic scale.

Chapter 2 overviews the land cover of the territory of the Japanese empire. The chapter shows that the greater part of Japan's territory was covered by mixed forest while Sakhalin was covered by coniferous forest. The empire was by no means rich in forest resources. Therefore, Japanese foresters attempted to increase the area of managed coniferous forests used for building materials and pulp by planting trees in wastelands and lands where no trees grew. However, these attempts were frustrated by local land use contexts. In Taiwan, there was insufficient access to land at altitudes where coniferous trees suitable for building materials could grow. In addition, the central highlands and indigenous controlled land were not subjected to Japanese rule and it was very difficult for imperial forestry to create ideal forest space there. Japan forced the Korean empire to begin forestry operations in 1908 with the enactment of the Forest Law prior to the annexation of Korea in 1910. The law incorporated forest areas with the intention of improving wasteland through forestation. However, foresters' ambitions were subverted by local slash-and-burn farming, which Japanese foresters portrayed as a "barbaric" land use practice that caused the destruction of forests. Forestry in Empire Japan, as such, did not proceed in the ideal way foresters had envisioned.

To increase the area of coniferous forest, afforestation programs were implemented through symbolic ceremonies to circulate the idea of tree planting. Thus, afforestation in imperial Japan was promoted from the perspective not only of political and economic resource utilization, but also that of cultural symbolism, as discussed in Chapter 3. This chapter underlines that the development of the forestation movement in mainland Japan from the early 20th century to the Asia-Pacific War

not only attempted to spread the spirit of forest protection among the people, but also made afforestation an imperial event by linking it to the emperor system. In particular, the events of the Imperial Enthronement Ceremony commemorating the accession of the Showa Emperor to the throne in the late 1920s unified the greening campaigns that had been held in various regions.

Among the colonies and controlled areas, the greening and afforestation campaign developed particularly early in Korea, even before its annexation. It was an attempt to spread the forest-loving ideology among the Korean people, who had been reluctant to plant trees. The campaign was promoted not only by the colonial government in a top-down approach, but also by local associations which connected local Korean people and the empire. The Chosun Forest Association (朝鮮山林会), formed in 1921, played a leading role in the public-private greening movement. The Association conducted a variety of projects: screening tours of forestry films, publication of forestry-related books, distribution of wildfire prevention posters, and so on. In the afforestation program, because the Korean peninsula lacked sufficient forest area, and its increase was recognized as very important, practical forestation strategies were prioritized over more symbolic programs. For example, actual tree planting and afforestation emphasised the importance of greening the devastated areas of the Korean Peninsula by selecting Korean tree species, not necessarily idealised Japanese tree species, so that the saplings could take firm root.

Chapter 6 details the forestry industry in Korea, tracing the history of forestry in Korea from the Forest Law enacted of 1908, which aimed to clarify forest ownership during the Korean Empire, to the demarcation of state-owned forests and forest management after Korea became an imperial colony through a detailed analysis of documents. As in mainland Japan, commemorative tree plantings were carried out in Korea, and trees were planted around schools to create school forests. These projects were thought to spread the spirit of afforestation among the Korean people. The fact that tree planting was not only for timber production, but also for flood control and erosion control, is one of the features of Korea's forestry policy in Imperial Japan. Of particular interest in this chapter are the restrictions on burning and the state of forest management. Slash-and-burn agriculture, known as "火田 (화전)" was an essential part of cereal cultivation, but it also hindered the expansion of forests and was viewed as an "uncivilized" method of farming by the Office of the Governor-General of Korea. For this reason, foresters tried to educate the local people who practiced slash-and-burn agriculture to shift to forestry. However, the productivity of slash-and-burn agriculture was not low, and the local people resisted the forced abolition of slash-and-burn agriculture and the shift to forestry. This suggests that imperial forestry was by no means universally practiced, but was influenced by the local context and forced to adapt.

Other chapters address how forestry and forest management were shaped by the local contexts of Taiwan, Sakhalin, Manchuria, and Southeast Asia, poignantly illustrating that Imperial Japan's afforestation policy was never coherent, but was

inflected by each local context. In Taiwan, as in Korea, where the winds and sands were fierce, afforestation was never only for timber production but also for erosion control. Additionally, the interaction between centre and periphery, formed through imperialism and colonialism, was never unidirectional in terms of domination-subordination. In Sakhalin, an important supplier of pulpwood, repeated forest fires and insect infestations depleted the forests, limiting the off-island export of timber. The fact that newly incorporated into the empire regions of Southeast Asia played the role of producing wood for pulpwood shows that the interconnected network of places is a complex one, formed not only by humans but also through the natural environment.

I would like to know more about how the relationship between the scientific and local knowledge of imperial foresters continues to reshape forest spaces. In the book's Conclusion, editor Nakashima notes that Imperial Japan's forest management did not exhibit the "hybrid" forest management between local agricultural methods and scientific forestry that was seen in the British colonies. "Hybrid" forest management is never created in a situation of equal power relations between ruler and colony. For example, how did policy of abolishing "uncivilized" slash-and-burn agriculture in Korea racialize and stigmatize people who were engaged in the agriculture as "uncivilized" people too? How was the slash-and-burn agriculture method affected by this? I understand the discussion is limited by historical sources. However, this outstanding thick study encourages us to raise further questions about how such knowledge and technologies are "generated" in imperialist and colonialist power, influenced by local context.