Reflecting upon the career in the colonial government of Formosa that was to win him world-wide fame in the early twentieth century, Baron Shimpei Goto once remarked that “Japan had made no preparations whatever for the administration of the island at the time of its acquisition”. Underscoring this neglect, he added, was “the fact that, in the case of other nations confronted by a similar occasion, elaborate schemes are generally formulated to meet contingencies connected with the occupation of a new territory”. One may wonder whether the Baron included among the “elaborate schemers” the “absent-minded” builders of the British Empire.

It does not matter whether Baron Goto was aware of the complex historical processes, of the actions and accidents, involved in the creation of great empires. It is not even important whether he really believed that the colonial programs of the imperial powers were, like the war plans carefully devised by army general staffs, drawn from secret files as occasions demanded. Goto was primarily interested in the formulation and implementation of a colonial policy for Japan. His observation on his government’s lack of preparedness to assume control and direction of Formosan affairs should thus be taken not simply as a confession and condemnation but rather as a statement of purpose.

The real problem confronting Baron Goto was that Japan was a latecomer to the contest for overseas empire. Unlike the nations of western Europe, whose far-flung imperial dominions had been acquired over greater or less periods of time since the sixteenth century, Japan’s imperial holdings at the dawn of the twentieth century consisted of little more than a semi-savage island acquired but a few years before as a fruit of war. Whatever experience Japan had known in overseas expansion and settlement lay, moreover, in so remote a past as to be more an historical memory than a colonial tradition. Furthermore, the Japanese possessed neither a literature on colonial affairs, a policy to guide their efforts in their new overseas territory, nor a class of administrators trained in the government and exploitation of other men. On the surface, Japan’s venture into the

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business of colonialism at the turn of the present century appeared extremely unpromising.

Yet, the builders of modern Japan’s colonial structure worked with many advantages. They did not, on the one hand, have to contend with the inertia, dead-weight, and accumulated debris of imperial systems that had literally grown like Topsy nor was it necessary for them to cope with the manifold vested interests created in an extended process of historical change. They did not inherit the abuses and mistakes entrenched by time in almost every colonial administration nor did they possess the biases and illusions of peoples old and complacent in the ways of empire. Japan’s pioneer colonial policy-makers were, on the other hand, able to avail themselves of the vast experience accumulated by the imperial powers over the course of several centuries and by discriminate selection to secure the knowledge and technique promising the success of their efforts.

Despite the heavy debt to prevailing imperial systems, it would be an error to conclude that Japanese colonialism was a mere amalgam or refinement of the policies and techniques of other powers. Had this been the case, it is doubtful that the Japanese colonial system would have achieved its ends so well. For the aims and purposes of the Japanese, however they be evaluated, were nevertheless their own, while Japanese needs and ambitions as well as the range of alternatives for their fulfillment were as much the product of Japanese history and culture as of the pressure of the events of the times. Borrowing from the rich experience of other nations but making a distinct contribution themselves, Japanese colonial builders were to devise a system that was peculiarly Japanese.

Easy, if at times misleading, as it may be to generalize about the colonial systems which rest upon empires created throughout the world during the age of expansion, it is apparent that basic inspirations and motives for their creation have historically varied. What is of particular significance, however, is that few of the drives which culminated in colonialism in America, Africa, and Asia before the nineteenth century may be detected in the more recent Japanese activity. European expansion to and colonization of other lands was for long generated by scientific intellectual curiosity, by the frustrations and daring of merchant adventurers, and by the naked greed of established élite classes. The conquest and settlement of areas remote from mother countries were, in addition, sparked by religious dissidence in Europe, by evangelical and missionary fervor, and by the quest of emigrants for the political and economic opportunities closed to them at home. As a consequence of these various impulses, traditions and practices of international and intercontinental mobility were well established among Europeans by the late nineteenth century and colonialism was accepted by many peoples as a normal aspect of national affairs.

In Japan colonialism was to follow a course of development significantly different from the western European patterns. Though Japan was a late arrival on the scene of imperialism, it was for reasons dissimilar to German and Italian,
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not to speak of American, experiences. The inescapable fact is that Japanese history from the middle of the seventeenth to the middle of the nineteenth century had in several fundamental respects no counterpart in Europe.\(^2\) Not only did the Japanese confront for long a Chinese Empire dominating Eastern Asia and its outlying areas but their own abortive efforts had convincingly demonstrated the folly of expansionist ventures.\(^3\) But of infinitely greater importance was the policy of national isolation and seclusion deliberately pursued, and with astonishing consistency, by the government of Japan from 1640 to 1854.\(^4\)

How Japan would have fared and what changes would have been wrought, had not the military dynasts of the Tokugawa Shogunate maintained their policy of national isolation for two centuries and more, are questions which can elude only speculative answers. Conceivably, an expanding foreign commerce, technological innovation, and intellectual and cultural stimuli from abroad might have undermined the foundations of Tokugawa life and society and weakened Japan for an ultimate and devastating onslaught by imperialist powers from the west. It is, on the other hand, possible that the steady and persistent intrusion of alien influences might have hastened those internal social changes that would have enabled Japan to enter the competition for overseas empire sooner and under different circumstances than she finally did. Or, it is imaginable that Japan as a nation open to the world might have developed the potential to withstand both the threats of imperialist aggression and the temptations of overseas expansion.

Whatever the fate of Japan might have been as a nation accepting rather than rejecting the outside world, once the final decision had been reached by the Tokugawa Shogunate, it was rigorously enforced for more than two hundred years. Neither the Shoguns, the de facto rulers of the land, nor their councillors, apparently ever entertained serious regrets or misgivings about their policy nor is there any convincing evidence that the daimyo and their samurai retainers ever chafed at the restrictions against relations with foreign countries and peoples. Occasionally the Shogunate did, to be sure, sanction an excursion

\(^2\) For suggestive and imaginative comments upon this problem see Sir George Sansom, Japan in world history (New York, 1951), passim.

\(^3\) The nature and scope of Japanese expansionism under Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the so-called "Napoleon of Japan", have been well treated in the master's dissertation of John Lane. For a summary see John Lane (ed.), Columbia University East Asian Institute Studies no. 4; researches on the social sciences on Japan (New York, 1957), 60–62. Hideyoshi's onslaught against Korea in the late sixteenth century has recently been studied in Giuliana Stramigioli, "Hideyoshi's expansionist policy on the Asiatic mainland", Asiatic Society of Japan, Transactions, 3rd series, III (December, 1954), 74–116.

into the forbidden high seas. It also deemed it politic to blink at the clandestine trade carried on by powerful daimyo remote from the centers of Tokugawa strength and to frown upon, but tolerate, an infrequent intellectual attack upon the policy of isolation. But, by and large, the seclusion policy enjoyed the overwhelming support of Japan’s ruling military class.

During Tokugawa times national seclusion was gradually to become more than a demand of the law; it was to develop into a tradition with a sanctity and an orthodoxy of its own. Given the existing system of political control and military power, this tradition could, in the final analysis, be challenged and changed only by those who upheld it. Nevertheless, the policy inherited by successive generations of Tokugawa shoguns was so strongly rooted that its ultimate modification and abandonment were to necessitate the invoking of a primary purpose of the policy, namely, the security and welfare of the country.

Because of the long duration of the policy of national isolation and the drastic restrictions upon economic, cultural, and intellectual influences from abroad, there was no social class in Tokugawa Japan whose existence and development were not peculiarly affected. Although the socio-legal stratifications established during the early seventeenth century were not to be fundamentally altered during the Tokugawa period as a whole, social and economic change could not be entirely arrested. While, however, stresses and strains were to be raised, they were not of sufficient intensity or strength to destroy the legally established social system and, especially, the domination of the military aristocracy. The implications of this may perhaps be best appreciated by reference to the history of western European peoples during the era of Japanese isolation.

Doubtless the foremost social characteristic of Tokugawa Japan was the prolongation of the existence of a feudal warrior class long after the invention and development of firearms and cannon had relegated the European knight to history and romance. During the later years of the Shogunate some samurai were to acquire considerable political power on a local level and were to aspire after the prerogatives and power of the Shogunate itself. Many other samurai were, however, to become deeply impoverished and, perhaps for that very reason, to become all the more jealous of their social status and privileges. Powerful or

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poor, however, the samurai possessed in common a contempt and dislike for the merchant of the cities and towns and a callous indifference to the plight of the peasants. But no matter what the ambitions or grievances of Japan’s social classes may have been, there could be no fundamental change without the consent of the sword-carrying governors.8

No class in Tokugawa Japan was to be more constricted and warped in its development than the merchant. Hedged in by innumerable restrictions, discriminated against by sumptuary legislation, and denied opportunities to participate in lucrative foreign trade, the Japanese merchant of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was conservative in action and defensive in psychology and outlook. Unlike his counterpart in Europe the Tokugawa merchant was not and could not be an adventurer blazing new trails to commerce in distant lands nor a middleman dispensing the goods brought to Japan from countries near and far. He could fulfill, and even dare refuse, the demands for credit from financially embarrassed feudal lords but, because of the “Great Peace” prevailing in the land, he could not reap the tremendous profits from the financing of war and foreign adventure that the members of his class in Europe did. And, most importantly, though he could ingratiatingly solicit favors from the mighty military aristocrats, he could never influence, much less shape, policy on matters of state.

In addition to the merchants, the artisans and peasants, the great mass of the people of Tokugawa Japan, were, in admittedly immeasurable ways, vitally affected by the policy of national isolation. Though their numbers increased very sharply during the years of peace and prosperity in the seventeenth century, population growth was little more than nominal during the last one hundred and fifty years of the Shogunate. Some peasants were to seek an escape from unbroken hardships and misery by migrating to the cities and towns but, since neither feudal lords nor their fiscal agents could look lightly upon the loss of subjects and tax payers, the overwhelming number of tillers of the soil were unable to look forward to an improvement of their lot. In contrast, thus, to the western European artisan and peasant, to the serf of tsarist Russia, and to the early American colonist and pioneer, Japanese peasants and laborers were never to have in Tokugawa times the opportunity of emigration abroad or of flight into a rich but unsettled frontier area. Confined to his village by an effective system of political and police control and restricted in his movement by the powerful ties of family and tradition, the Japanese peasant was resigned to living out his life in the locale of his birth.

The characteristics of Tokugawa life, reflecting the long standing barriers to international communication and intercourse, will to a large extent account for the peculiar nature of later Japanese overseas expansion and colonialism.

Suggestive comparisons may obviously be made with the experience of other peoples who entered the race for colonies at relatively late moments in modern history. In the case of the United States, for example, it is assuredly the revolutionary tradition, the anti-colonial spirit, the democratic outlook, and the call of an open frontier which largely serve to explain both nineteenth century American isolationism and the pattern and rationalization of twentieth century American colonialism. Japanese colonialism, with the distinct features it has possessed it recent times, may similarly be interpreted partially in terms of the Tokugawa legacy. The tradition of isolation, the inheritance of capricious and arbitrary rule, the persistence of a hierarchical society and value system, the perpetuation of a petty and provincial “middle class” devoid of entrepreneurial spirit, and the existence of a crushed and immobile peasantry – this heritage of Tokugawa history was to be reflected unmistakably in later Japanese colonial thought and practice.

The years between the abandonment of Tokugawa isolation and the final commitment to colonialism, embracing roughly the last half of the nineteenth century, were a critical era of transition for Japan. It was during this period, as in Germany, Italy, and to some extent the United States, that a multitude of relatively autonomous states were to be forged into a more centralized political organism, that the fires of nationalism were to be vigorously stoked, and that expansion towards newly claimed political frontiers was to occur. These were years when new dimensions were to be given to the political concept of Japan, when visions of an even greater Japanese Empire were to be stirred, and when the basis of a Japanese “irredentism” was to be laid. The years from Commodore Perry to the Treaty of Shimonoseki were, accordingly, if not consciously preparatory, nevertheless formative for Japanese colonialism.

The era of transition to colonialism was initiated with the severe shock to Tokugawa foreign policy delivered by Commodore Perry’s naval-diplomatic mission in 1853. The ensuing struggle for decision within Japan understandably soon resolved itself into a problem of national security. Other motives of the contending factions apart, it is clear that concern for the defense of the land pervaded the various and conflicting proposals submitted by the Shogunate and the many feudal lords. Of all the centers of feudal power, however, the Shogunate was the most realistic in recognizing that the abandonment of the isolationist policy was both necessary and inevitable and that a radically new point of departure in matters of foreign policy had to be established. The Tokugawa were, however, to discover too late that their decision meant the destruction of the political and social system essential to their own survival.9

It is an irony of history, if a commonplace of power politics, that the foreign policy of the Shogunate, which had aroused such bitter opposition amongst the

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feudal clans of the southwest, was to be adopted in its essentials once Tokugawa rule had been destroyed. In the same way that Shogunal policy after the conclusion of the Perry Treaty emanated from apprehension over western aggression, so too the foreign policy of the new government of the Meiji Emperor, established in 1868, was to a large extent founded on fear. The vigor of its activities notwithstanding, the Meiji regime was for long to be on the defensive in its international relations, its practical objectives being the maintenance of peace, the observation but ultimate abolition of the so-called "unequal treaties", and a modest expansion aimed at the promotion of the national security.10

Only when the vital but limited goals of its foreign policy are borne in mind is it possible to understand the expansionist activities of the early Meiji government. In moving into and establishing or strengthening its authority in the Bonin Islands, Okinawa, Hokkaido, and the Kuriles during the first decade of the Restoration era the central government of Japan had no thought of embarking upon a career in empire and colonialism.11 Possessing or inheriting claims of varying validity to sovereignty over these islands, the Meiji leaders viewed their actions as a reassertion and clarification of authority rather than as the annexation and conquest of alien lands and peoples. Despite the misleading terminology of the times, neither the Bonins, Okinawa, nor Hokkaido was considered by government officials to be a colonial area nor its settlers and inhabitants to be colonial subjects.12 As a consequence, these outlying islands were to be administered in ways completely different from territories later annexed into the Japanese Empire.13

Allowing for technical differences in constitutional and legal status, Japanese policy towards Okinawa and the Bonins was for many years to be suggestive of the treatment accorded Hawaii, Guam, and Puerto Rico by the United States. But while American attitudes and behavior towards their insular possessions were primarily the product of indifference, Japanese policy in their southern islands was largely dictated by the poverty of the mother country. It was a rare Meiji oligarch who would have disputed the need for vigorous development programs in the Bonins, Okinawa, and Hokkaido but, considering the tremen-

11 Security considerations will also explain Japan’s abortive attempt to purchase the island of Guam from Spain shortly after the Meiji Restoration. The particulars are set forth in Shimomura Fujio 下村富十男, Meiji ishin no gaikō 明治維新の外交 (The foreign relations of the Meiji restoration) (Tokyo, 1948), 291–294.
12 The Japanese expressions kaitaku (開拓) and shokumin (植民) may both be translated as "colonization". The former term has, however, the connotation of "reclamation" or "development", while the latter implies settlement of an alien territory. In speaking of their activities in the Bonins, Okinawa, and Hokkaido the Japanese customarily used the term kaitaku.
13 The Bonin Islands were to be incorporated into Tokyo-fu, or the government of Metropolitan Tokyo. During the Meiji period (1868–1912) Hokkaido was to be administered by several different types of government, finally being established as a cho (町), or territory. Okinawa alone quickly attained prefectural status.
dous modernization enterprises under way in the homeland, it was evident that the required financial and economic resources were not available. Before very long, however, the course of international developments helped to resolve the dilemma and to establish the scale of priorities in Japan’s program of overseas development efforts.

When the early Meiji government proclaimed its sovereignty over the Bonins and Okinawa, it had cause to believe that its claims would not be unchallenged. As it became increasingly evident that Japanese sovereignty over the Bonins would not be contested by the United States and Great Britain and that Chinese claims to Okinawa would not be aggressively pressed, Japan’s minimum objectives of security in these areas were thereby fulfilled. Resting content with acknowledged possession of these islands, the Meiji government was able to pursue a “holding action” in the south, the development of the Bonin Islands and Okinawa being postponed to a more propitious time. Until the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 the Bonin Islands were, consequently, as little known to most Japanese as are the Virgin Islands to present-day Americans, while in Okinawa this period of Japanese rule was to be dubbed the “Do-Nothing Era”.

As opposed to its somewhat lackadaisical policy towards the Bonins and Okinawa, the Restoration government was alert, even before the Shogunate had been completely destroyed, to the need for positive action in Hokkaido. Here, at the “Northern Gate to the Empire”, it was well understood that a bastion against Russian expansion in the northern Pacific would have to be constructed.

The activities of other western powers in China, Southeast Asia, and India may well have caused chronic uneasiness among the Meiji leaders but the confrontation of Russians and Japanese in the northern islands, it was quickly realized, posed an immediate and critical problem. No elaborate explanation was thus required when the colonization and defense of Hokkaido were given top priority in the government’s development programs.

Had any nation of the late nineteenth century but Japan undertaken a venture of the proportions of the Hokkiado colonization project, scarcely a ripple of international interest would probably have been aroused. That Japan,

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17 John A. Harrison, Japan’s northern frontier (Gainesville, 1953), 64.
whose own economic modernization had not as yet advanced beyond the stage of mere ambition, could seriously plan to uplift as culturally and economically "primitive" an area as Hokkaido is ample testimony to her desperate concern for security. Being acutely aware of its technical limitations, however, the new national government approached the problem in a fashion typical of the Meiji period as a whole. With the assistance and advice of foreign experts, largely American, a promising development program was inaugurated. It is a silent commentary upon the Japanese view of Hokkaido that the experienced administrators and technicians of nations with established colonial empires were not engaged.

The Hokkaido development project is probably the least appreciated and most denigrated undertaking in the development of modern Japan. It was perhaps inevitable, given the pioneer nature of the enterprise, that mistakes be made, that criticism be profusely raised, and that the project be sucked into the maelstrom of power politics. Yet it was tragic when the program, which had been making excellent progress, was to founder upon a scandal. Though a basically sound policy was abandoned, the experiments in Hokkaido were nevertheless to provide the Japanese with their first practical experience in the development and colonization of areas dissimilar to the home islands. At the same time the unhappy ending of the original project was to obscure a record of sound achievement and to cast the very term of colonization into popular disrepute.

Japanese colonialism, as we have known it in our times, had its origins in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War. It is not necessary to determine here whether Japan conspired to seize the great island of Formosa from China in 1894–95; it is most likely she did not. What is germane is that, when Japan acquired sovereignty over the tropical island by the Treaty of Shimonoseki, she encountered the problems which were to become typical in her colonial endeavors in the twentieth century. It was, moreover, in Formosa that Japan was to create the pattern of colonialism which was, with the addition of subsequent more sophisticated glosses, to be applied in the administration and exploitation of such later conquests as Korea and Manchuria.

Whatever her reasons for acquiring Formosa may have been, events were rapidly to demonstrate that Japan did not know for some time what to do with

19 See the appraisals by John A. Harrison, Japan's northern frontier, 140–142, and Shosuke Sato, "Hokkaido and its progress in fifty years", in Shigenobu Okuma (compiler), op. cit., II, 513–529.
her new possession. Entailed was a crucial problem somewhat similar to that which the United States was to face a few years later when the Philippines were annexed. The Japanese government had, in short, to determine whether it wished to become engaged in the prospectively profitable but potentially troublesome business of colonialism. At the time Formosa was considered to be as great a military and strategic liability as an asset, while, apart from a noisome carpet-bagging element in Japan, responsible political and business leaders were chary of a commitment to an area notorious for its political instability and economic stagnancy. Until the Japanese government reached a final decision on the disposition of Formosa, there could, thus, prevail no colonial policy worthy of the name and Japanese efforts, largely of an ad hoc nature, were to be devoted to the pacification of the island by a military regime.21

In view of the purpose which Formosa was later to serve in the Japanese Empire, it is easy to overlook what may well have been a compelling reason for Japan’s decision to embark upon a career in colonialism and, moreover, literally to dedicate herself to the achievement of success according to the prevailing standards of imperialism. Desirous of securing unqualified acceptance as a great power, of becoming the “Great Britain of the East”, Japanese leaders may well have feared that, if they failed to respond to the challenges which empire posed, admission to the ranks of the world’s élite might be delayed. A mere glance at the foreign press was enough to reveal the firm doubts entertained about Japan’s, or any Asian nation’s, capacity to become a successful colonizing power. National pride, whetted by the sneers and disparagement of western commentators upon the Far Eastern scene, may well have been crucial in shaping Japan’s final decision on colonialism.

Once Japan had overcome her irresolution and decided to make the best of her opportunity in Formosa, a colonial policy was to be developed with characteristic care and foresight. The first step was the determination of the principles upon which Japanese rule in the new colony would rest. As soon as these were established to their full and firm satisfaction and Japanese colonial leaders themselves understood the goals that were to be pursued, their subsequent efforts were to be largely concerned with the discovery and application of methods.22 In establishing a system of colonial administration on Formosa

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21 “We acquired Formosa in 1895 after the war with China”, said Inazo Nitobe, “largely because we could not get anything else.” And, he added, “the island was for a while a white elephant to Japan, and its sale was even discussed at one time.” Inazo Nitobe, “Japanese colonization”, Asiatic Review, XVI, no. 45 (January, 1920), 115. See also George W. Barclay, Colonial development and population in Taiwan (Princeton, 1954), 7.

22 The establishment of a firm and efficient colonial administration in Formosa occurred during the office of the fourth Governor-General, Lieut.-General Viscount Kodama, much of whose fame as a colonial administrator was derived from his able and brilliant Chief of Civil Administration, Baron Shimpei Goto. “In Baron Kodama and Dr. (now Baron) Goto”, said the scholar Seiji Hishida, “Japan has produced colonial administrators worthy to be placed in the same class as Lord Cromer and Cecil Rhodes.” Seiji Hishida, “Formosa: Japan’s first colony”, Political Science Quarterly, XXII, no. 2 (June, 1907), 268.
Japan was, *mutatis mutandis*, to follow generally the same procedures which had been and were being used in promoting the modernization of the homeland. If the Japanese achieved remarkable results in their new colony, it was because they themselves had already acquired in Meiji times an incomparable experience in institutional innovation and manipulation.

The preconceptions held by the architects and directors of Japan’s colonial system were few but nevertheless vital. Though at first sensitive but later disdainful of world opinion, Japanese colonial leaders never possessed serious doubts about their country’s purposes in Formosa. For the rationalizations of the conscience-stricken western colonial powers, for the doctrines of the “white man’s burden” and of “la mission civilisatrice”, they had but polite cynicism and scorn. For them the welfare of Formosa and its peoples had no meaning apart from the interests of the mother country and there existed no intention of lavishing blood and resources upon an enterprise open to eventual liquidation. Disavowing any desire to prepare their Formosan colonial subjects for ultimate self-government, much less independence, Japan subordinated and, at best, identified the destiny of Formosa with her own future.

The establishment of a highly centralized and authoritarian colonial administration in Formosa may be explained variously. It was due not merely to the fact that the Meiji oligarchs, inheritors of the Tokugawa political tradition, could not grant to Japan’s colonial subjects the political power denied to Japanese citizens. Nor was it because social organization and governmental traditions on Formosa did not lend themselves to decentralized or indirect rule. Most important perhaps was that the Japanese government did not consider the development of Formosa to be an end in itself but rather a means to an end. Japan’s rulers would, accordingly, brook no interference or opposition with their plans to reduce Formosa to the desired relationship with the mother country. Administered by a military governor backed by the overwhelming strength of the imperial army, for Japan never placed faith or reliance in colonial troops, Formosa under Japanese rule was to be transformed into an “island of policemen”.23

In the pursuit of her purposes in Formosa Japan obeyed the sternest dictates of *sacro egoísmo*, the island being considered as much a business enterprise as a government operation.24 Determined that their colony be a source of profit to the mother country, Japanese administrators were to assess their successes and

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23 “The extension of the police force”, General Count Katsura, second Governor-General, recalled, “was an object of paramount importance in the government of Formosa. So also was the implanting in the minds of the people a high regard for the virtues of His Majesty the Emperor, as well as to secure a thorough appreciation by them of the goodwill and sincerity of our Government, and this could not better be attained than by extending the administrative police force of the island.” General Count Katsura, “Formosa; the early administration”, in Alfred Stead (ed.), *Japan by the Japanese* (New York, 1904), 582.

24 Formosa, said Baron Goto, “has come into more intimate relations with the economic world of Japan Proper, to which it is now bound by ties as close as those of mother and child.” Okuma, *op. cit.*, II, 547.
failures by the principles of the accountant. Other nations may well have
derived the satisfactions of empire from the mere possession of overseas domains
but to Japan Formosa represented an investment which was expected to provide
the return of both principal and interest in as quick a time as possible. This does
not mean that national pride was not stirred by the continuing record of progress
in the fostering of education, public health, transportation and communication
facilities, and the instruments of law and order, for these achievements were
concrete demonstrations to the world that Japan’s colonizing ability could not
be lightly treated. But it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Japan’s greatest
joy in Formosa was the annual financial statement.25

Baron Shimpei Goto, the first Chief of Civil Affairs on Formosa, perhaps
best exemplified Japan’s modern colonial spirit. “I wish”, he said, “to found
Formosa on scientific principles”.26 For the Baron, the political and moral
issues of colonialism having been settled by the very annexation of the island
into the Japanese Empire, the primary responsibility of the colonial servant was,
accordingly, to advance the interests of the mother country and, coincidentally,
those of the colonial subjects. To achieve these ends it was necessary to cope
with what were essentially administrative and technical problems, which were
susceptible to solution within the limitations of human intelligence and know-
ledge. With these convictions Goto and his aides, notably Dr. Inazo Nitobe,
proceeded to dissect and analyze the imperial systems of the world in a method-
ical search for colonial techniques and methods. Formosa under Goto and his
successors was literally to be transformed into a colonial laboratory and from
persistent and unflagging study and experimentation there was to emerge a
rational and scientific system of colonialism which had its foremost parallels
in aspects of the Dutch, French, and German empires.27

25 Baron Shimpei Goto, “Formosa under Japanese administration”, Independent, LIV
(July 3, 1902), 1589, is a typical example.
26 Quoted in Yosaburo Takekoshi, Japanese rule in Formosa (New York, 1907), 11.
27 “During my stay in Taihoku [capital of Formosa]”, Takekoshi wrote, “I often went to
Baron Goto’s official residence and was astonished at the splendid collection of books there.
These were arranged on shelves built on both sides of the corridors, both upstairs and down.
Afterwards I was told by the Baron that the greater part of this collection belonged to the
Governor-General’s office, and he added, ‘You know we look upon the Governor-General’s
office as a sort of university where we may study the theories and principles of colonization, in
which branch of knowledge we, Japanese, are not over-well-posted. The Governor-General is
the president, I am the manager, and this room we are now in is the library of this Colonization
University.” Ibid., 21–22.

Closely associated with Baron Goto, a medical doctor by training and with experience in
public health administration, was Dr. Inazo Nitobe. Though he was widely known to
Americans for many years, through his voluminous writings and numerous lectures, as an
interpreter of Japanese history and culture to the west, Nitobe was primarily an agricultural
economist with extensive experience in the development of Hokkaido. Before assuming his
post as head of the Industrial Bureau of Formosa, he toured Southeast Asia and Australia,
studying tropical agriculture. From his observations he developed the famous Taiwan Sugar
Policy, the introduction of which was to transform the economy of the island and establish its
Regardless of the label that be attached to Formosa under the Japanese – a colonial laboratory or an island of policemen\textsuperscript{28} – there can be no doubt as to its success in terms of the aims and purposes of its sovereign. Within a period of a generation Japan was to eliminate all scepticism about its ability to carry on as a colonizing power. Japan was to demonstrate in Formosa to the satisfaction of the most confirmed and demanding imperialist that backward and underdeveloped areas could be technically transformed into colonies highly profitable to the mother country. And in the same way that late nineteenth century experimentation in the development of Hokkaido was to furnish experience fruitfully applied in South Sakhalin, acquired from Russia in 1905, so too were the techniques of colonization devised in Formosa to be introduced with conspicuous results in Korea as well as in the Pacific island “mandates” obtained after World War I.

Japan’s last great venture in colonialism before 1931, when the initiative in expansionism was to be seized and held by aggressive militarists, was the annexation of Korea in 1910. As opposed to Formosa, possession of which had been acquired without much forethought, the extension of Japanese control over Korea represented the final solution to a problem which had been discussed and debated since the early years of the Meiji era. The nature of Japanese interest in the peninsula country, at first strategic and then increasingly economic, had rarely aroused broad differences of opinion among the leaders of the Meiji government; Korea had rather raised the question of the method of fulfillment of these interests. Successive victories in war with China and Russia removed all lingering doubts.\textsuperscript{29}

Having been deeply involved in Korean affairs for more than a generation before their annexation of the country the Japanese knew Korea as they had not known Formosa. In Korea there was to be little vacillation and indecision, no searching and groping for techniques of administration and exploitation, for the colonial policy and practice that had been forged in the crucible of Formosa were found to be generally adequate. Thus, though the Japanese were for a brief while to toy with a protectorate, their inability completely to control the country by indirect rule, the persistence of local opposition, and the logic of their own colonial convictions were to lead to the utter destruction of the Korean monarchy. If, as a result, Japanese rule in Korea until the end of World War II was to differ from that in Formosa, it was not in essence but rather in scale.

Korea was never permitted by the Japanese to exist as a mere excrescence of empire. Like Formosa, the old “Hermit Kingdom” was also expected to submerge its identity in and to have no interests apart from those of its imperial sovereign. And when Koreans, renowned for their stubbornness, refused to

\textsuperscript{28} These designations are used respectively in: “Japan as a colonizing power”, \textit{Spectator}, XCVIII (March 23, 1907), 447–448; and George H. Kerr, “Formosa – colonial laboratory”, \textit{Far Eastern Survey}, XI, no. 4 (February 23, 1942), 50–55.

\textsuperscript{29} See especially Hilary Conroy, “\textit{Chosen mondai:} the Korean problem in Meiji Japan”, \textit{American Philosophical Society, Proceedings}, C, no. 5 (October, 1956), 443–454.
play the role cast for them by their conquerors, they were ruthlessly and brutally hammered into submission and compressed into a system of political and police control far more effective, because of its technological superiority, than anything the Japanese themselves had known in Tokugawa times. During an age, moreover, when many of the colonial administrations throughout the world were being modified in response to the pressures of their subject peoples, Japan increasingly foisted upon her newest colony an apparatus of soldiers, policemen, bureaucrats, technicians, and teachers to guide the Koreans in the proper fulfillment of their duties as obedient and productive subjects of the Emperor. For sheer effectiveness of political control no other colony of the twentieth century ever approximated Korea, a prototype in many ways of the police states which were to emerge in the aftermath of World War I.\(^30\)

Unlike other imperial states Japan has never been accused of having neglected her colonies; on the contrary, if any charge may be made, it is that Korea, not to speak of Formosa, suffered from excessive attention. Although Japan was no different from other colonial powers in possessing a fervent faith in the superiority of her own way of life, the consequences of this ethnocentric pride were unique. Other colonial powers frequently encouraged, but never insisted upon, the adoption by colonial subjects of the culture and ways of the metropolitan country; for Japan with its traditions of social and cultural conformity this policy was evidently inconceivable. If, accordingly, Koreans have to this very day continued to resent the harsh effects of the Japanese regime, it is not simply because of the merciless economic exploitation and draconian rule of their erstwhile colonial overlords. Perhaps far more traumatic was the conscious and deliberate campaign by the Japanese to extinguish a culture and way of life of more than two thousand years in the making.\(^31\)

Extraordinary as it may seem, most Japanese of the past generation or two have persisted in passing over lightly what was assuredly the crowning insult to Korean nationalistic sensitivities. For far from being apologetic, countless Japanese have rather been proud of their nation’s achievement in their former colony. In the Japanese view, Korea was during its colonial period raised from a politically degenerate kingdom to a well-ordered society, from a backward and poverty-stricken country to a productive and flourishing land, and from a helpless pawn of power politics to a secure and protected member of a virile imperial system.\(^32\) As in the case of so many peoples who have secured release

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\(^30\) The literature dealing with the imposition of Japanese control over Korea is fairly extensive. An excellent account will be found in the chapter, “I will whip you with scorpions”, in F. A. McKenzie, *Kored’s fight for freedom* (New York, 1920).

\(^31\) The depth of Korean bitterness was to be revealed when negotiations were conducted with Japan in 1953 for the settlement of many outstanding problems. When the Japanese representative, Kubota, stated that Korea had benefited from Japanese rule, the government of President Syngman Rhee broke off discussions and for several years thereafter refused to resume talks until the objectionable statement had been withdrawn. Ki Suk Shin, “Perspectives of Korea-Japan conference”, *Chungang Herald*, II, no. 2 (April, 1958), 3.

\(^32\) Japanese and Korean views of the colonial record are studied in Hyman Kublin, “Korea
from imperial domination, Koreans have, not surprisingly, been unwilling to
draw their verdict from official statistics and self-serving government reports.
For, the records carefully compiled by colonial administrative officials reveal
that Japanese policy was above all devoted to uplifting Korea but unfortunately
not its people.

Though Korea presented an infinitely more complex colonial problem than
Formosa, the Japanese colonial administration was able to achieve results
extremely gratifying to the home government. Formosa having been established
on a firm political and economic footing before the annexation of Korea
occurred, it is understandable that Japan could approach the new colonial
challenge with immeasurably greater boldness and confidence. By the time,
 furthermore, that the desired political conditions had been established in Korea,
a project that required at least a decade, Japan had had the benefit of a half
century of industrial and scientific training and progress. But rather than strike
out de novo and cope with the costly and formidable technical problems involved
in a program of development for Korea’s sake, Japan preferred to apply her own
skills and experience, limited though they were, to the realization of her own
interests. An economic system independent of or competitive with that of the
mother country was avoided. Japan did not, thus, retard the economic devel-
opment of Korea; it was more advantageous to warp and bend it to her own
needs. In time Koreans were to find it as difficult to live with their conquerors
as to exist without them.33

The absorption of Korea represented the culmination of a distinct phase in the
evolution of Japanese colonialism. Under the leadership of oligarchic bureau-
crats powerfully influenced by their own peculiar historical traditions, by their
hopes and ambitions for personal and national advancement, and especially by
their fears for their country’s future, an empire of modest territorial proportions
was created in the peripheral areas of the Japanese archipelago. This empire,
pieced together from “no-man’s islands” on the sea frontier to north and south
and particularly from satellites of the decaying Chinese Empire, was far more
compact than any other imperial regime of the twentieth century. Relatively
easy to control with the military and police forces of the homeland, the Japanese
Empire, which embodied the hopes and anxieties of Meiji Japan itself, excited
the dread and antagonism only of its despoiled and chastened neighbors but
scarcely the envy and concern of the richer and stronger imperial powers of the
times. If there existed any grave danger to the perpetuation of this empire, it
lay perhaps in a Japanese appetite for overseas territory increasingly whetted
by Japanese imperial success.

and Japan: neighbor’s keepers?”, United States Naval Institute Proceedings, LXXXI (October,
1955), 1084-1091.

33 During the period of Japanese rule it was rather Koreans who emigrated to Japan in the
tens and hundreds of thousands. By and large they were employed as cheap, unskilled
(New York, 1951), is useful for the entire problem.
Among the many empires of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Japanese was in many ways unique. What distinguished it primarily was neither its size nor location, neither the composition of its peoples nor the manner of its creation, which was decidedly conventional in an age of rampant imperialism. Of paramount significance was perhaps the Asian provenance of this empire. For, although imperial regimes had risen and fallen in the East for several millennia, the phenomenon of an expanding Asian empire in an era when the western powers were engaged in the obliteration of national independence in Asia was clearly extraordinary. And whatever motives and drives, aims and purposes, that may be ascribed to the western nations in their imperialist activities, it is most likely that none are to the same degree attributable to Japan.

Until the end of the Russo-Japanese War and its aftermath it may be postulated that security considerations were uppermost in Japanese expansionism. Japan, being an Asian state, could, in view of the temper and trend of the times, scarcely rest secure in the hope and belief that she alone would be exempt from western imperialist aggression. While it may validly be argued that Japan had actually little to fear from the western powers, it is nevertheless understandable that Meiji statesmen could not afford to gamble with their nation's future. The deliberation with which a program of modernization, designed to insure the survival of national independence, was prosecuted had, consequently, as its obverse face a foreign policy of limited expansion into nearby critical areas essential to the defense and security of the land.

In the construction of her empire before World War I the tremendous stakes and her limited resources permitted Japan, a relatively backward and undeveloped country, only the barest margin for political, military, and economic error. Not able to afford even the luxury of interest in any other part of the world but the East Asia of which she was a part, Japan's maximum choice was to focus national attention and energy upon the creation of a Greater Japan. The resulting imperial domain and colonial system were to be as distinct and peculiar as the circumstances responsible for their creation.

The study of Japanese imperialism and colonialism is useful not only for the light cast upon Japanese history itself; it provides also additional perspectives for an understanding of these historical phenomena which have in modern times customarily been associated with western civilization. Viewed in this manner, the older British, French, and Russian empires as well as the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch may be seen as self-generating or self-perpetuating political organisms reflecting the changing needs, problems, and pressures of national states evolving over greater or less periods of time. With these complex imperial apparatuses the pre-World War I Japanese empire obviously had little in common. Of the later imperial systems founded by the United States, Italy, and Germany, it was perhaps only the product of Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm II that approximated the Japanese.

It is a curious historical coincidence that at the very moment the old feudal
order of the Tokugawa was giving way to imperial centralization in Japan, a congeries of autonomous states was simultaneously being welded into an empire in Germany. But, unlike Japan, political unification in Germany after 1848 had to be achieved in face of the opposition of powerful surrounding states. Victory in successive wars against Austria-Hungary and France meant, accordingly, only the elimination of obstruction to German unification but not the destruction of external danger to the new German state. Ringed by potentially hostile nations, Germany under the cautious Bismarck could not like Japan seek a coveted security through expansion into weak and fluid border areas. The Iron Chancellor attempted rather to fashion through diplomacy an invincible alliance system.

No pressing sense of need for security led Germany, as Japan, to engage in overseas imperialist activity. Bismarck was probably never more than half convinced of the value of the colonies demanded by venturous business interests nor could he view without quiet cynicism the quest for prestige of clamorous nationalists. In Germany, thus, as opposed to Japan, the state adopted its policy of expansion in Africa and the Pacific in response to internal pressures of a quasi-popular nature. If Bismarck had to be urged on to a course of imperialism, Kaiser Wilhelm II, who assumed a personal and active direction of the affairs of state, could scarcely be restrained. And, tragically, though the territories which he added to the empire of Bismarck’s creation were nothing but frills, his policies and activities were to hasten the explosion that destroyed imperial Germany itself.

In impulses and manner of creation the pre-World War I empires of Germany and Japan differed significantly. Some suggestive similarities may, however, be noted in the spirit and policy of these two powers towards their colonial domains and subjects. Both Germany and Japan, possessing relatively uncluttered views of their roles as colonial powers, were from the outset determined to extract the maximum benefit from their imperial properties and tended, accordingly, to emphasize efficiency and precision in their administrative and exploitative practices. Insofar as Germany is concerned, colonial techniques and usages reflected sharply the highly developed bureaucratic tradition, the deeply rooted social paternalism, the economic rationalism, and the scientific bent of the homeland itself. The German colonial agent, whether administrator, businessman, or technician, was, moreover, ordinarily able and competent and imbued with a stern sense of purpose and mission. If he did not succeed in building a more lasting empire, it was assuredly because of the more fundamental failure of the fatherland.

The Japanese and German empires exemplified the most highly integrated systems of colonialism in modern times. In much the same fashion as the Germans, the Japanese understood to their full satisfaction their purposes in engaging in colonialism and pursued their objectives with relentless and unswerving logic. Possessing outstanding administrative and organizational
talent, having a fine regard for the intricacies of detail, and revealing a peerless appreciation for methods and techniques of whatever cultural origin, the Japanese fashioned a colonial system which patently did not fail for lack of determination and effort. Like the German, the Japanese colonial system was successful as long as it endured.

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