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Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s) (review)

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(Review)

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effectively resolved only after a media-saturated, too-confident Speight overplayed his hand by demanding a government totally unacceptable to Commodore Bainimarama. The military then seized on this tactical extravagance to crack down, arresting Speight and his ringleaders, and edging the country away from the complete breakdown of order that was all too imminent in mid-2000.

In essence, what occurred in 2000 constituted an eruption of long-standing disaffection within the Fijian community. Standing back from these events to locate deeper causes of alienation, the authors retrace already familiar ground. As a public mechanism, the state in Fiji has not been emancipated from indigenous pressures molding it for the furtherance of sectional objectives. The colonial edifice has persisted through institutions that, while ostensibly designed to protect the indigenous community, have pauperized the majority to the advantage of self-serving elites. Poor standards of educational attainment among Fijians remain a running sore. Pressures for democratization and ostensible multiracialism have chafed against Fijian commoner discontent with the economic outcomes of chiefly led paramountcy. Although constrained for periods, the ethnic populism that Speight exploited never lay far below the surface.

Looking ahead (“Key Issues for the Future”), the authors acknowledge the need for a more honest appraisal of indigeneity; the need to disentangle that agenda from supremacist sloganeering; the need for national identity creation, devolved decision making, transparency, accountability, and

adherence to the rule of law by Fijian institutions; as well as the need for greater specificity in the targeting of assistance to disadvantaged Fijians. They also recommend that all Fijian citizens should be known as Fijian, and where differentiation is required, the terms *i taukei* (indigenous) or *vasu* (nonindigenous) be utilized. Anti-racialism should form a specific educational project; civil society must be strengthened; and economic strategies entailing a massive redistribution of resources are required. But how politically feasible are these laudable objectives? A reading of this lively account suggests that they face an uphill battle, given that strong interests of both a national and an international nature may impede equity delivery, land reform, and a political system unused to governing by popular consent.

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Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s), edited by T Fujitani, Geoffrey M White, and Lisa Yoneyama. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. ISBN cloth, 0-8223-2532-2; paper, 0-8223-2564-0; vi + 462 pages, tables, photographs, notes, bibliography, filmography, index. Cloth, US\$59.95; paper, US\$19.95.

This book has its origin in a 1995 international conference marking the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, and is part of a groundswell—or shockwave—of “memory activities” reconsidering, rewriting, and rearguing that war. The goal is to

promote “the recovery and reinterpretation of events, experiences, and sentiments that have been pushed to the margins of the past” (5). Partly, this means representing people whose war stories are in danger of being lost. But it also indicates a political agenda, a response to how “the great global powers of the twentieth century . . . have managed to produce a forgetfulness about themselves as imperial and colonial powers” (5). The book is intended to reveal “some of the means through which national modes of representation succeed in systematically marginalizing or silencing dissonant memories” (7). What are these “dissonant” memories?

Some are willful attempts to efface or distort the past. Marita Sturken discusses how American national memory has and has not memorialized the Japanese internment camps. Daqing Yang describes the complex links between modern politics in Japan and China and the memory of the Nanking massacre. Others critique public images: Lamont Lindstrom on how photographic representations of Pacific Islanders fit (or were reworked to fit) the narratives of war; Vicente Diaz’s reflections connecting memories of Liberation Day on Guam with American intentions in the Pacific; T Fujitani on images of Nisei soldiers in US government propaganda and in the 1951 film *Go for Broke*. Geoffrey White compares the original documentary film shown at the Pearl Harbor Memorial (built in 1962) with the new film produced in 1991–1992. Lisa Yoneyama discusses the *Enola Gay* controversy at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. And, in the essay of perhaps the most immediate practical use, Morio Wata-

nabe’s “Imagery and War in Japan: 1995” at long last explains the popularity of “Hello Kitty” and “Sailor Moon” products as aspects of representations of war in Japanese popular culture.

Some authors provide a view “from the margins” of people or place. George Lipsitz describes how African-American soldiers and civilians responded to the Asia-Pacific War, and explores linkages between African Americans and Asian Americans, between racism and imperialism in US history. Historian Arif Dirlik views “the war from the perspective of East/Southeast Asian societies” (303), where local struggles temporarily became engaged with the global conflict, yet renewed their local meaning in postwar years. Diana Wong’s fascinating chapter describes the public memory of the war in Singapore, where the Japanese erased all signs of the British past through a process of public renaming and memorializing. Yet, ironically, hardly a trace of the Japanese occupation is evident in modern Singapore. In wartime Malaya, “multiple scripts of national liberation” (225) were played out: Japanese presented themselves as liberators of Singapore (from British rule), some of the Malay elite joined the Japanese, the Indians of Malaya became part of a nationalist movement for Indian freedom, and the Malayan Communist party fought against the Japanese while also opposing British colonial rule. What, then, was to be done with public memory of this era when the British returned? For “the memory of British defeat, of ‘native’ disloyalty, as well as of communist resistance—had to be suppressed” (227). As it happened, the

British anticommunist fight, rather than the Japanese occupation, “has come to hold the place of founding myth of the modern Malaysian state” (229). Thinking about Singapore’s history became so intractable that the topic was actually removed from primary school textbooks for a time in the 1970s and 1980s. Wong argues that the city in recent years is experiencing a “reinstatement of history” to accompany its rediscovery of itself as a “city-state” with a distinct regional role (234).

For me, the most compelling chapters in the book focus on Asians who experienced the wartime and postwar years as a complex layering of colonialism, violence, and shattered identities. Ishihara Masaie, in “Memories of War and Okinawa,” describes civilian experiences during the war and the battle of Okinawa, as well as modern perceptions of the war, concluding with an argument for Okinawa as a center for promoting peace through construction of a war memorial. Chen Yingzhen’s “Imperial Army Betrayed” is a straightforward account of Taiwanese who served in the Japanese military. After the war, these men could not be considered co-veterans by the Chinese victors, yet they were rejected by the Japanese government, which they had loyally served. This sensitive exploration of a difficult and unsolvable human problem is, as the author writes, “one particularly vivid illustration of the ongoing effects of a layered colonial history” (198), and it carries more weight than any amount of polemic. A similar case is that of the Korean “Imperial Soldiers” (in a chapter by Utsumi Aiko); men recruited or conscripted by the Japanese Army lost Japanese citizenship

after the war, and so never received any military pensions or compensation for their service. Japan took no responsibility for demobilization or repatriation of soldiers and civilian employees in its former colonies (214). Yet some of these Korean soldiers (like Taiwanese in similar positions) were tried as Japanese war criminals for acts performed as members of the Japanese military in Allied prisoner-of-war camps. Also missing from the postwar Japanese reckoning are the non-Japanese victims of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Toyonaga Keisaburo describes how the bomb victims living in Korea and elsewhere “have been entirely excluded” from medical or social welfare provisions available to Japanese survivors (382).

After a series of such chapters, readers may feel they are standing in a crowded room with everyone shouting out that attention must be paid to their suffering. And that is true enough, though it is not easy to hear. In the final chapter, “The Politics of War Memories toward Healing,” Chungmoo Choi suggests a more personal, and perhaps more effective, approach: “Is it not necessary to reformulate our question of ‘how much apology (or how much reparation) is enough,’ and redirect our energy by asking how to heal the wound?” (397). Her essay about understanding and healing Korean comfort women (centering on language and silence in three films about them) moves into a complex argument about the gendering of the war, and of colonial resistance, which links the historical and contemporary understanding of the women’s circumstances with broader questions of “masculine

nationalist discourse” and modern military prostitution. Choi argues that while silencing these victims (“the dominant mode of operation in Japan as well as in other Asian countries”) prevents healing, a nationalistic discourse of reparations also “does not heal the psychic and subjective wounds but deepens them when not properly executed”; instead she urges finding “a space so they can speak the pain of war memories and their subjectivity grounded on pain transformed” (407).

The chapters in *Perilous Memories* vary in style as well as content; some rely heavily on academic jargon while others present heartrending stories with effective simplicity. Anyone interested in the Asia-Pacific War, the politics and poetics of memory, how history serves the purposes of the powerful and how it can be made to serve the needs of the powerless, will find something of use in this volume.

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Fighting the Enemy: Australian Soldiers and Their Adversaries in World War II, by Mark Johnston. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-521-78222-8; xi + 206 pages, figures, maps, notes, photographs, conventions and abbreviations, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$54.95.

What do soldiers think of “the enemy”? Do they necessarily and unequivocally see the opposing force merely as “the enemy”? Are they driven by unqualified animus? Logically, since each side is aiming to kill the

other, it would seem that the individual combatants ought to be fired by hatred of their opponents, thereby reducing their immediate conflict to one of essential simplicity. After all, in warfare, action must beget at least an equivalent reaction or one’s own life is in acute danger, and the gratuitous surrender of existence is not normal behavior in any circumstances. Wilde may not have been thinking of battle when he wrote “for each man kills the thing he loves,” yet, as Mark Johnston shows, there are subtleties and ambiguities involved in the clash of armed warriors. A core hatred may not be manifest in conscious antipathy, and the business of fighting may be rationalized professionally into “just doing my job,” leaving other and deeply felt issues suppressed.

In any case, “the enemy” is not a constant and homogeneous category. Taking the opinions of Australian soldiers as his case study, Johnston demonstrates the fact that there were marked distinctions in the ways they judged their opponents. To begin, he stresses the fact that the Australians faced several “enemies” in two vastly different phases of war. The first of these was in the Middle East, where they faced three different sets of opponents: the Italians, the Germans, and the Vichy French. The second was the Pacific, where they faced the Japanese. While a degree of anger was a common element, their attitudes varied toward each of these “enemies.”

The Italians, whom the Australians first encountered at Bardia in Libya in December 1940, were rarely taken seriously. The Australians brought to the fight a racially based sense of superiority, which was seemingly