Postcards, power and the production of colonial knowledge

Reflections on Japanese imperialism and the case of the Truku-Japanese war, 1914

Abstract

In this essay I explore the imaginative geographies of Imperial Japan as they were inscribed in picture postcards during the 'golden age' of this highly-circulated medium. Coinciding with the entrenchment of Japanese rule in the newly-acquired territory of Taiwan, the global postcard industry exploded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, providing large, middle-class audiences with a portable and affordable photographic medium depicting a wide range of subjects. In the Japanese Empire, where 1.5 billion postcards were circulated in 1913, picture postcards formed a key arm of official propaganda designed to legitimise colonial rule in Taiwan. Japanese photographers, often working with government networks and officials, adopted a scopic regime that reframed the colonised in accordance with imperial hierarchies and political goals.

Consulting Lafayette College's East Asia Image Collection, I examine a set of postcards produced to commemorate the Truku-Japanese War (1914), which finalised the Japanese conquest and established colonial sovereignty over Taiwan's resource-rich indigenous zone. Though recent historiography has established how the discursive functions of postcards depicting indigenous Taiwan helped commodify the colony as an object of Japanese tourism and resource extraction, far less attention has been paid to the violence of this process – violence embedded in the fabric of colonial knowledge production. Building on an established literature on Japan's 'scientific' colonialism, my intention is to chart the construction of Taiwanese lands and peoples as imperial subjects through the visual orders of the Truku War postcards. In doing so, I hope to draw new conclusions on the place of violence in colonial visuality and to connect this East Asian context to the already well-established literature on the scopic regimes of European empires.

Introduction

"If we are to subjugate the aborigines, we must of course know them." Prefacing his pioneering study of Taiwan's indigenous peoples in 1913, the influential Japanese ethnographer Mori Ushinosuke underlined the political rationality of studying and documenting native society and customs as a cornerstone of Japanese administration on the island.[1] His bid for knowledge production dovetailed with a surge in military activity across Taiwan's specially-administered 'Aborigine Territory', a mountainous and resource-rich region in the island's northeast, during Governor-General Sakuma Samata's "Five-Year Plan to Conquer the Northern Tribes" (1909-1914). Enlisting with the Bureau of Aboriginal Affairs as a paramilitary surveyor, Mori was the only prominent ethnographer to undertake fieldwork and photography in the indigenous zone as its scattered communities were violently subdued by an extensive military operation.[2] The 'scientific colonialism' in which he participated was understood by his contemporaries – and continues to be by present-day scholars of Taiwan – as the application of empirical observation and scientific knowledge to colonial politics. Then, as now, this 'civilising' project has been cited as a distinguishing feature of Japanese rule in Taiwan (1895-1945) and a key factor in its modernising achievements, supposedly made with the general acquiescence of the colonised.[3]

But this appraisal of scientific colonialism on Taiwan is flawed. Well-established histories of "the most thoroughly inventoried colonial area in the world" tend to neglect the central role that state-sanctioned violence played in colonial knowledge

[1] Mori Ushinosuke, 'Regarding the Taiwan Aborigines' (1913) quoted in Robert Tierney, 'Violence, Borders, Identity, An Ethnographic Narrative Set in Colonial Taiwan' in Michele M. Mason and Helen J.S. Lee, eds., *Reading colonial Japan: text, context, and critique* (Stanford, Calif., 2012), 129.

[2] Tierney, 'Violence, Borders, Identity', 129.

[3] Nadin Heé, 'Taiwan under Japanese Rule. Showpiece of a Model Colony? Historiographical Tendencies in Narrating Colonialism', *History Compass*, 12, no. 8 (2014), 632-633.

production.[4] Scholars have persuasively demonstrated how power relations on the occupied island were shaped by Japanese endeavours to map, survey and extract resources from its first formal colony. Often these claims are undergirded by a Foucauldian interpretation of governmentality, with a focus on how colonial biopower was exercised through disciplinary regimes and discursive practices aimed at administering imperial subjects in accordance with biological principles. But as Nadin Heé has observed, this narrative of scientific colonialism doesn't fully account for the systematic correspondence of this project with the exercise of colonial violence. [5] Historians of Taiwan and the Japanese Empire see only one side of the coin, failing to consider how colonial governmentality was structured by policies of punishment and repression, particularly towards indigenous communities inhabiting the area known then as the "savage border". Initially a site of resistance to colonial authority, the indigenous zone was effectively reterritorialised in the early years of Japanese rule (1895-1945) through "punitive expeditions" that saw state-led violence wedded to the knowledge-producing practices of fieldworkers like Mori, including ethnography, cartography and photography. The Truku-Japanese War of 1914, one such expedition and the main subject of this paper, saw the climax of Sakuma's Five-Year Plan as thousands of soldiers were deployed to establish Japanese sovereignty over landscapes and populations that were simultaneously being studied and classified by Mori and his colleagues. To flip the coin, then, is to recognise that the power to control a geographical area and to enact what Benedict Anderson calls "total surveyability" is conjoined with the power to alter and destroy autochthonous peoples, places, objects

[4] Quote from George W. Barclay, *Colonial Development and Population in Taiwan* (Princeton, 1954), x.

[5] Heé, 'Model Colony?', 632-641; for examples of this tendency see chapters in Ping-Hui Liao and David Der-wei Wang, eds., *Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule, 1895 – 1945: history, culture, memory* (New York, 2006).

and environments.[6] The opposing face of scientific colonialism in Taiwan — what proceeds from the power to control bodies and administer life — was the "subjugation of life to the power of death" termed by Achille Mbembe as "necropolitics".[7] Expanding on the *droite de glaive* at the heart of Foucault's biopolitics, necropower describes the sovereign capacity to impose *social* death as well as the destruction of bodies, as part of the modern state's "instrumentalization of human existence". Exercising the power of death means incorporating "exception, emergency, and a fictionalized notion of the enemy" into ethnicised or racialised orderings of subpopulations, whose humanity is rendered more or less expendable by the state.[8] In what follows I will argue that the reciprocity of violence and knowledge production during the Truku-Japanese war alerts us to the role of necropolitics in Japan's 'scientific colonialism'. Numerous studies have charted the course of Japanese ethnology and exploration on Taiwan and its interwoven history with colonial politics, assembling a variety of sources to track the development of imperial policy and ideology as Japan solidified its control over what was seen as a dangerous and exotic island replete with virgin forests and primitive savages.[9] Building on this research I will focus on the Truku (or Taroko) 'incident' as a case study of scientific colonialism in the early twentieth century, specifically through the medium of the picture postcard. For 1914 was marked not only by the finalisation of Taiwan's conquest by Japan and the apparent submission

[6] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), 184-185.

[7] Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture*, 15, no. 1 (2003), 39-40; Paul D. Barclay cites necropolitics in the context of Taiwan's indigenous, but his analysis remains centred on disciplinary regimes in which punishment was exceptional, *Outcasts of Empire: Japan's Rule on Taiwan's "Savage Border," 1874-1945* (Berkeley, Calif., 2018), 29.

[8] Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', 12-17.

[9] Yuko Kikuchi, 'Introduction' in Kikuchi, ed., *Refracted Modernity: Visual Culture and Identity in Colonial Taiwan* (Honolulu, 2007), 4-15; other key works include: Tierney, *Tropics of savagery: the culture of Japanese empire in comparative frame* (Berkeley, 2010); Liao and Wang, *Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule*; and Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire.*

of its indigenous tribes to colonial authority, but also by the 'golden age' of the picture postcard across the world, when the rise of the international postal system converged with progressions in photographic technology and with popular enthusiasm for travel, empire and national identity. In Japan, where the circulation of 1.5 billion postcards in 1913 was second only to their circulation in Germany, this affordable and versatile medium offered the urban middle classes an unprecedented visual record of the wider empire, capturing people and places but also commemorations of newsworthy events and military triumphs.[10] I will be addressing selected items from the Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, a 100-card set depicting a Japanese military campaign staged high in the mountains of what is now Taroko National Park.[11] Following John Tagg, I will consider these visual sources as discursive practices whose meaning must be deciphered in accordance with historical conditions – as inflections on context, rather than direct windows onto a reality that is always-already meaningful.[12] In colonial Taiwan postcard photography was a kind of archiving practice, documenting Japanese encounters with new geographies and recording their reconfiguration into the colonial imagination. Institutionally, as well as discursively, Japanese photography on island was closely connected to scientific colonialism and was therefore complicit in its record of violent coercion. The ephemeral visuality of the picture postcard also assisted the construction of otherness in imperial society by chiming with prevailing discourses on race and civilisation. If, as Tagg claims, the "evidential force" of a photograph functions "only within certain institutional practices

[10] John Fraser, 'Propaganda on the Picture Postcard', *Oxford Art Journal*, 3, no. 2 (October 1980), 39-40; Kenji Satô, 'Postcards in Japan: A Historical Sociology of a Forgotten Culture', *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, 11 (2002), 35-38.

[11] 'The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection', *East Asia Image Collection*, Lafayette College (Easton, Penn., 2012), http://digital.lafayette.edu/collections/eastasia/ (accessed 07/04/2019).

[12] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis, 1993), 119.

and within particular historical relations" then the first task is to outline the historical conditions that gave rise to Japanese scientific colonialism and its brutal execution against the Truku people, and to locate the policies, ideologies and discourses that the Truku War postcards are in conversation with.[13] Having established this critical context, I will then turn to postcards themselves, dividing my attention between representations of the colonised other on the one hand and projections of civilised self on the other. As we shall see, photography was a key medium through which colonial hierarchies could be visually situated for large audiences. Therefore, by reading against the grain of picture postcards from the age of empire, we can try to identify the necropolitical relationships that facilitated the violence of scientific colonialism against what was deemed to be expendable, sub-human, or simply an obstruction to national sovereignty.

The context

The much-discussed coupling of colonial knowledge and imperial power in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was a global phenomenon that became especially pronounced under, but was by no means restricted to, Japanese rule in Taiwan. This duality made up the fabric of scientific colonialism and is widely regarded by historians to have reached its apex at the turn of the century, as the globalisation of information-gathering technologies gave new impetus to an array of imperial practices, ideologies and institutions that were themselves shared transnationally – a process whose origins are normatively traced to European models of imperialism.[14] The

[13] Tagg, *Representation*, 5.

[14] Kikuchi, 'Introduction', 5; Hyung-il Pai, 'Staging 'Koreana' for the Tourist Gaze: Imperialist Nostalgia and the Circulation of Picture Postcards', *History of Photography*, 37, no. 3 (2013), 301.

position allocated to Japanese imperialism within this framework is frequently one of mimesis, with a focus on the 'refraction' of imperial modernity from the West that tends to overlook the significance of local conditions in the empire and of the multidirectional global interactions that shaped imperial policies and practices in this era.[15] With regard to scientific colonialism, the temptation must be resisted to see Japan simply as a fervent imitator of European empires – even if we accept the importance of photography, anthropology and other archiving practices that initially developed in Europe. Instead we must acknowledge, following Sebastian Conrad, that such transfers are shaped both by the processes of their exchange and by the conditions of their reception.[16] We can go even further by employing 'transimperial' perspectives which demonstrate why exactly global integration and exchange mattered in Japanese empire-building, but without privileging Eurocentrism or Japanese exceptionalism. Exploring the "interplay of imperial competition, comparison and connection" illuminates the geopolitical imperatives and shared racial and biological discourses that fuelled the violence of scientific colonialism on Taiwan, making it a useful lens on the historical context of the Truku-Japanese war.[17]

Reconsidering the place of Japanese imperialism among other imperialisms sheds light on the development of scientific colonialism in a number of ways. It first of all enables us to more precisely locate the mechanisms of power that joined violence to knowledge production, highlighting in particular the role played by mass media such as the picture postcard. Japanese ethnographers and anthropologists such as Mori, in

[15] Kikuchi, ed., *Refracted Modernity*; Robert Eskildsen, 'Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan's 1874 Expedition to Taiwan', *American Historical Review*, 107, no. 2 (2002), 388-391.

[16] Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, 2016), 67-69.

[17] Daniel Hedinger and Nadin Heé, 'Transimperial History – Connectivity, Cooperation and Competition' *Journal of Modern European History* 16, no. 4 (2018), 449-451.

collaboration with colonial administrators, were keen followers of western approaches to documenting and surveying the colonised, lending their ethnic taxonomies and hierarchies of human development in Taiwan a grounding in European racial science and Social Darwinism. But these external ideas and practices did not by themselves speak to Japan's repressive colonial policies – this involved, as Paul Barclay contends, institutional connections between ethnology and administration and a discursive interface that disseminated and embedded knowledge across imperial society. The Taiwan government-general had control over both these fronts, maintaining tight restrictions on both photography and anthropological fieldwork in the indigenous zone so that administrators could oversee the production of knowledge and of visual grammars in Taiwan postcards.[18] Picture postcards were one of the most successful forms in a range of mass media and propaganda that developed in the Japanese Empire with relative autonomy from European influence. As the tides of patriotism and imperial enthusiasm swelled following Japan's 1905 defeat of Russia, the association of postcards with imperial modernity and national identity was at its strongest in the years surrounding Sakuma's Five-Year Plan.[19] Postcards from Taiwan, including the Truku War set, helped lay claim to the colony by constructing its image based on the authentic indigeneity of photographed landscapes and communities. This set is particularly revealing in the way in which its frames are staged to directly associate the 'discovery' of indigenous bodies and geographies with military measures to place them under Japanese sovereignty and incorporate them into a hierarchy of civilisation. This bio- and necropolitical process was certainly aligned to the *global* circulation of

[18] Barclay, 'Peddling Postcards and Selling Empire: Image-Making in Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule', *Japanese Studies*, 30, no. 1 (2010), 85.

[19] Satô, 'Postcards in Japan', 39; Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire*, 194.

postcards and imperial knowledge-producing practices, but Barclay's overture reminds us of how *local* contexts also shaped photographic discourses of power and violence.

Secondly, a transimperial approach brings us closer to the geopolitical and ideological aspects of scientific colonialism. Japan's pursuit of total conquest and total surveyability in Taiwan must be placed in the context of its longer-term ascension to the first rank of imperial powers, a position that was confirmed by its participation in the First World War and precipitated by its high-profile victories in wars against China (1894-1895) and Russia (1904-1905), the former resulting in the Qing Dynasty ceding its administration of Taiwan to Japan. Competing and coexisting on the world stage with powerful maritime empires such as the British meant establishing legitimacy through the twin processes of civilisation and modernisation. According to Yuko Kikuchi, the 'refractive' nature of this undertaking was exemplified by the Japanese desire to sew its own seeds of progress on the virgin soil of Taiwan, which in effect became Japan's own 'orient' just as Japan had for centuries been subject to orientalisation by the west.[20] The eastward trajectory of the colonial civilising mission and its imitation and refraction in Japanese imperialism is well evidenced, but we can also benefit from identifying chains of causation that themselves originated in the East Asian context, in which Japan sought to establish hegemony and where national and imperial interests developed with significant independence from European imperialism, or even in opposition to it.[21] China was a centrepiece in the geopolitical puzzle laid out before Japan and a more immediate source of competition and comparison than any western power for Japanese hegemony in East Asia. It also

[20] Kikuchi, 'Introduction', 9-10.

[21] Mostly addressing China, Rebecca E. Karl makes a case for the complex interactions that informed Asian regional identity in this period: Karl, 'Creating Asia: China in the World at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century', *American Historical Review*, 103, no. 4 (1998), 1096-1118.

offered a readymade colonial template in its prior administration of Taiwan, which inflected scientific colonialism in ways that Europe did not. The legacy of the Qing rule extended most prominently to the ideological and administrative bisection of Taiwan into a 'primitive' east and 'modern' west, which accorded different rights – or to recall Mbembe, different levels of humanity and exposure to death – to different peoples in a spatialised system of classification.[22] Along the savage border, Qing institutions, practices and legal typologies underlaid the Japanese management of Han Taiwanese majority populations and some integrated aborigines, in a process that we can reasonably separate from the diffusion of racial ideologies from Europe.[23] As Japan began extending colonial governmentality deep into the indigenous zone, we see a hybrid of European and East Asian approaches being violently repurposed for the project of scientific colonialism. Transimperial perspectives ask us to reconsider the meaning of modernity and civilisation in this context – these discourses were themselves the products of exchange and competition between empires and cannot be traced meaningfully from the highlands of Taiwan back to the metropoles of Europe. They were also, under the rubric of scientific colonialism, instruments of power that linked inter-imperial legitimacy directly to the reterritorialisation of colonial possessions and imposition of biopolitical hierarchies in the interest of nation-building. The identification in Taiwan of different stages of development corresponding to different sovereign rights, combined with a state monopoly on violence and ethnographical fieldwork, is exactly what enabled necropolitics to function under Japanese rule.

[22] Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire*, 191-195.

[23] Ibid., 191-195; Harry J. Lamley, 'Taiwan under Japanese rule 1895-1945' in Murray A. Rubinstein, ed., *Taiwan: A New History* (Armonk, New York, 2007), 212.

When in 1909 the “big bang” of Sakuma’s Five-Year Plan was finally enacted to solve the “aborigine question”, it was seen as the decisive move towards Japanese omnipotence and omniscience in Taiwan, carrying the Meiji Emperor’s blessing and a considerable fund of fifteen million yen from Tokyo.[24] This marked the beginning of a punitive, rather than disciplinary, solution to finalise two decades of encirclement and creeping securitisation around the savage border. Supervised by the government-general, this military surge was accompanied by a comprehensive survey of the indigenous zone by fieldworkers such as Mori, who in turn produced key reports and visual records of the societies and landscapes facing imminent obliteration.[25] The campaign, its ideological background and its conclusion in the Truku-Japanese War were saturated with the flows of colonial knowledge, but it is important to briefly grasp the material conditions that incentivised punitive expeditions in Taiwan’s indigenous regions. From the early years of occupation, the Japanese administration had set its eyes on large repositories of timber and camphor deep in the ‘virgin lands’ beyond the savage border, holding indigenous communities directly responsible for sealing off this ‘storehouse of wealth’ from successive Qing and Japanese invaders. Chiming with a long history of treaty ports and free trade in East Asia, securing these resources was deemed to be strongly in Japan’s national and imperial interests while resident indigenous communities were deemed expendable, whether or not they offered resistance.[26] For Sakuma and other hardline administrators, military intervention was a necessary course of action to effectively dismantle any human obstacles to a total conquest of the savage border – the violence of the expedition being the logical solution for a population whose labour power could not be mobilised through

[24] Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire*, 29.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 29-31, 102-103.

disciplinary measures. In this sense, the Five-Year plan marked the complete integration of Taiwanese indigenes into a necropolitical hierarchy that designated them as "impediments to resource extraction".[27]

The postcards

It is in this context that we can now approach the commemorative postcards of the Truku-Japanese War with an informed understanding of what they are trying to depict, their strategies of visual ordering, as well as the material and discursive conditions of their production. At the height of its golden age the postcard industry consisted of thousands of small photography studios, printers and distributors, meaning that information is scarce on the individual activities of Nakano Photography Studio and S. Kuwada & Sons. Osaka, who the Truku War set is attributed to.[28] But, more importantly, we can make safe assumptions about the collaboration of official bodies, including the government-general itself, whose aborigine policy ensured the restriction and supervision of all photography and ethnography in the indigenous zone, and which most likely had a say over the photographic coverage of a campaign that was being watched carefully by Tokyo. We also lack concrete knowledge on the consumption of the Truku War set – it is likely that the postcards were gifted to soldiers after the war, but we can only speculate on their subsequent distribution across the empire.[29] We can however locate the set firmly in the postcard boom and more precisely in attempts by the colonial administration to celebrate the Five-Year Plan and inflate its

[27] Ibid., 29-31.

[28] All items are labelled as such, but no further details are available. See The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, http://digital.lafayette.edu/collections/eastasia/.

[29] Barclay, 'New Image Collection: Japan-Taroko (Truku) War, 1914', *H-Asia* (2015), https://networks.h-net.org/node/22055/discussions/77369/new-image-collection-japan-taroko-truku-war-1914 (accessed 07/04/2019); Personal correspondence with Paul Barclay, March 2019.

Fig. 1: “Members of the Sowasal Tribe after Surrender”, The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, image tj0081

Fig. 2: “A View of the Btulan Aborigine Territory from Mt. Qilai's Southern Peak”, The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, image tj0013

Fig. 3: “Ancient Trees at Big Taroko Mountain”, The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, image tj0040

Fig. 4: “Flowers of the Savage Territory: Tausai Aborigines”, The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, image tj0101

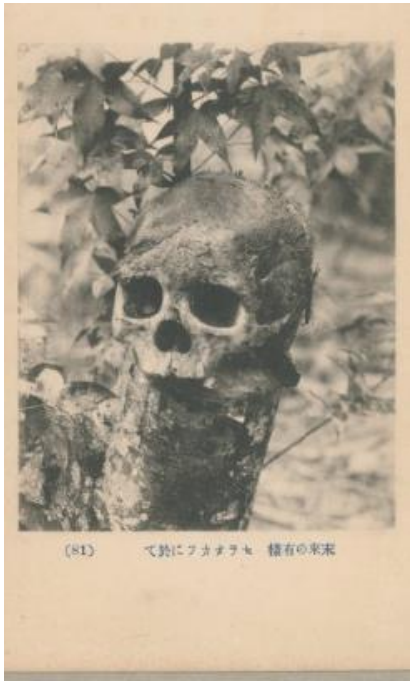

Fig. 5: “The Future (at Slaguqhuni)”, The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, image tj0083

Fig. 6: “The Encampment at Skahing and the Burning Down of Aborigine Dwellings”, The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, image tj0024

Fig. 7: “The Surrender Ceremony of the Tausai Tribe at Songshan Ridge”, The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, image tj0076

Fig. 8: “The Expeditionary Force's 9th Company Entering Puli's Triumphal Arch”, The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection, image tj0095

achievements. (Behind schedule and behind budget, Sakuma was forced to declare a premature victory after Tokyo's gaze shifted suddenly to the First World War, which Japan joined in late August 1914.)[30] Whilst the photographer(s) are unnamed, it is likely that they were influenced by the seminal photography and anthropological observations of government fieldworkers like Mori Ushinosuke, Torii Ryūzō and Inō Kanori, and were probably also enlisted by the Bureau of Aboriginal Affairs or in the Japanese military. Working actively alongside the military operation, Mori in particular was a leading authority on the Truku highlands – his photographs were widely disseminated in official postcard collections and even in western publications like National Geographic, while his classification of native tribes, used in the postcard captions, had been accepted colony-wide in 1913.[31]

These precarious empirical foundations are of course a limit on any conclusions we draw from the Truku War postcards, hence the concise nature of my analysis. Almost half of the 100 different frames primarily depict the Japanese military, with strong themes of logistics, camaraderie and celebration, while a quarter are concerned with the landscapes of the Truku highlands and the rest with indigenous people, places and artefacts. The preoccupation of the postcards with the experiences of the soldiers indicates a specific memorial function that is less relevant for this paper, but many of the pictures in their choreography – especially those showing military interactions with the indigenous – tell us something about strategies of representing the self and the other in scientific colonialism, and how knowledge production could overlap with a visual ordering of relationships between bodies. The photos were taken over the 74 days of warfare between May and August 1914, which involved over 3000 Japanese

[30] Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire*, 110.
[31] Ibid., 35; Barclay, 'Peddling Postcards', 99-100; Tierney, 'Violence, Borders, Identity', 129.

soldiers and larger numbers of mostly Han Taiwanese police and labourers, along with the assistance of naval bombardment and ground artillery. Out of a population of roughly 10,000, unknown numbers from the various Truku tribes fought and died.[32]

The other

Specific visual strategies are employed in the Truku War postcards to interpellate indigenous forms as 'other', existing outside of colonial modernity in the aforementioned necropolitical state of "exception, emergency, and a fictionalized notion of the enemy." The position of postcard photography at the intersection of art, travel writing and colonial knowledge production meant that these strategies often overlapped with commercial and material incentives, imperialist ideology and aesthetic practices such as the tourist gaze and the anthropological gaze. Taken together, these images present the discovery of the savage border by Japanese expeditionary forces and the incorporation of its peoples and objects into the imperial archive. 'Discovery' here is better described as the *invention* of an imaginary landscape that could overlay a (reterritorialised) topographical space, where 'landscape' functions as a unified discursive object to stand in for the people, places, artefacts and environments that it physically contains.[33] We can observe in the Truku War set how this holistic treatment of landscape enabled the other to be positioned outside of colonial normativity, where it could be legitimately subjected to punishment and repression. Figure 1 is a well-composed example of this strategy in the photographic lens. Having offered their

[32] Barclay, 'New Image Collection'; Scott Simon, 'Animals, Ghosts, and Ancestors: Traditional Knowledge of Truku Hunters on Formosa' in Dip Kapoor and Edward Shizha, eds., *Indigenous Knowledge and Learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa: Perspectives on Development, Education, and Culture* (New York, 2010), 86.

[33] Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Oxford, 2005), 2; W.J.T. Mitchell, *Landscapes of Power* (Chicago, 2002), 9-14; Kikuchi, 'Introduction', 14-15.

surrender, members of the Sowasal tribe are huddled close to the ground and nearby shrubbery as if they are themselves part of this environment. Though they carry basic hunting rifles (weapons that were probably acquired informally along the savage border and later confiscated by colonial authorities), behind them the almost spectral figure of a Japanese soldier is standing and watching from a clear position of power.[34] Embodying the colonial administration, the pacifying purity of his white uniform and the assurance of his grasp on what appears to be a provisional housing structure seems to imply his ownership of the conquered landscape and natural supremacy over the yielding indigenous.

The use of choreography and physical positioning to represent colonial power relations is a consistent theme in the Truku War set, and this is frequently achieved by presenting figures of modernity like Japanese soldiers as a foil to the untouched primitivity of the aboriginal landscape. Instantly recalling Japanese desires to claim the 'storehouse of wealth' contained within Truku territory, Figure 2 situates two Japanese officers at a dramatic viewpoint over these 'virgin lands', gazing purposefully towards the mountains and forests so coveted by Sakuma for resource extraction. The 'tourist gaze' at work in this image draws on a set of references specific to discourses of travel and discovery in East Asia, including a history of Qing and Japanese landscape painting in the Taiwanese mountains.[35] In this way, the jumbled topography of the indigenous zone is translated and 'orientalised' for Japanese audiences to fit popular conceptions of what an abundant and pristine landscape should look like. This misty, evergreen vista evokes the virgin forests that had become an object of imperial desire, a blank canvas on which modernity and civilisation could be painted by the brush of scientific

[34] Tierney, 'Violence, Borders, Identity', 129; Simon, 'Animals, Ghosts, and Ancestors', 86.

[35] Hsin-Tien Liao, 'The Beauty of the Untamed: Exploration and Travel in Colonial Taiwanese Landscape Painting' in Kikuchi, ed., *Refracted Modernity*, 51.

colonialism. At the same time, this promise of environmental transformation in the service of empire is juxtaposed – in Figure 3 among others – to a simulation of unchanging antiquity in the indigenous zone. By inverting the primitive and dangerous into the ancient and romantic, landscape images of the Truku War convey a sense of timelessness that distances the viewer from the physical geography behind the lens – the very landscape that faces dramatic alteration at the hands of the colonial administration. It is precisely in this ambiguity that the violence of seemingly innocuous depictions of the Truku landscape can be located: by positioning the colonial other outside of time and outside of history, the reality of its destruction is effectively erased, particularly for those who measure and observe at a distance. Barclay, citing Johannes Fabian, argues that this "denial of coevalness" (allochronicity) was a key element of the anthropological gaze practiced by Mori and other photographers, whose disproportionate focus on Taiwan's aborigines (just two percent of the population) was in clear alignment with the latter's subjection to excessively punitive regimes by the colonial administration.[36]

Timeless depictions of the indigenous landscape in the Truku War postcards are one of several devices that render the Truku as preternatural others, whose existence beyond the bounds of temporality grants them a naturally subordinate position in colonial hierarchies. Othering also extended to the fetishisation of 'unvarnished' Truku women such as the "Flowers of the Savage Territory" depicted in the penultimate card of the set (Figure 4), a classic ethnographical portrait in the style pioneered in Taiwan by Mori, which seems to offer the two indigenous girls as a prize for the victorious Japanese.[37] It is the only frame in the collection to be shot in a studio setting and

[36] Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire*, 196; Barclay, 'Peddling Postcards', 86-86.
[37] Ibid., 93.

removed from the imaginary landscapes of the Truku highlands, implying that even when subjugated the 'noble savage' will endure as an authentic representative of Taiwan, forever an object of colonial knowledge and desires. We can again see how the ontological ambiguity of aboriginal identity when othered in this way brings about the social death of indigenous communities, whose humanity and place in history is left undefined under the necropolitical regime. The morbid uncertainty of Figure 5 shows how this principle could also be applied to indigenous objects such as the skulls acquired from traditional headhunting practices. Usually displayed on a headhunter's skull rack, here the skull is staged on the pedestal of a tree stump, indicating its integration with the geography of the savage border as if it were a naturally-occurring museum exhibit.[38] The ominous captioning of this item as "The Future" (a similar frame is labelled "This World and the Next World") shows an interest in not just the discovery-invention of an ethnological artefact, but also in what such objects might imply about the cosmology of the Truku tribes, which faced an existential threat from its antithesis in the modernising rationality of the military expedition.

The self

The visual representation of Japanese imperialism as a modernising and civilising force entailed a projection of the self that must be considered alongside the construction of the other if we are to explain the violence of scientific colonialism in the Truku-Japanese War. Classic accounts of European orientalism focus on how the imperial self was defined in its opposition to both internal and colonised others, but the historical conditions under which Japan pursued hegemony in East Asia forced it to actively

[38] Simon, 'Politics and Headhunting among the Formosan Sejiq: Ethnohistorical Perspectives', *Oceania*, 82, no. 2 (2012), 177-178.

shape its imperial identity *vis à vis* regional rivals like China and the distant empires of Europe, for which Japan itself had long represented the more defiant side of the East Asian other. This called for a measured communication with the global discourse of race and power – with hegemonic European ideas like Social Darwinism but also with ethnic hierarchies specific to Asian cultures.

From this ascendant position on the world stage, the inauguration of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan was an opportunity to demonstrate the empire's capacity to embed modernity and civilisation far more extensively than the Qing Dynasty had previously managed; the inventorying of indigenous Taiwan was, of course, one of the most successful projects of scientific colonialism worldwide.[39] This called for a visual projection of military and organisational efficacy in the indigenous zone and in particular the mastery of its rugged terrain and unruly tribes. Figure 6 is one of multiple frames depicting the set-piece immolation of an indigenous structure, which symbolises the wider demographic displacement that was being enforced by the punitive expedition. On the far side of a vast and steep valley, the burning settlement blends in with thick forest, identifiable only by a plume of smoke. On the near side, Japanese soldiers watch from an orderly camp perched on the edge of ridge, leaving no doubt as to who controls the territory being presented to us. A closer view on a separate postcard shows the onlooking soldiers at ease – semi-uniformed with hands on hips – suggesting their calm contemplation as they gaze over the newly annexed landscape.[40] Figure 7 exercises a similar dynamic over a large group of yielding Truku men, women and children, who cling close to the mountainside surrounded and

[39] Jen-To Yao, 'The Japanese Colonial State and Its Form of Knowledge in Taiwan', in Liao and Wang, eds., *Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule*, 41-43.

[40] "Viewing the Immolation of the Headman's House from Skahing Village", The Truku-Japanese War Commemorative Postcard Collection**,** image tj0032.

surveilled on all sides by the Japanese military. The choreography of this frame, with uniformed soldiers flanking both sides of a command podium from which the indigenous sitting below are being dictated their fate, is far closer to a military tribunal than the "surrender ceremony" suggested by the postcard caption. Instead, this frame conveys the tacit threat of violence that is coercing the Tausai tribespeople into a voiceless surrender and thus is a visual manifestation of the repressive hierarchies being ushered in by scientific colonialism. Demeaned and infantilised by the punitive expedition, this position of the indigenous in this scene recalls their place in the ethnic hierarchies of the Japanese 'family state', which stood apart from European racialisations in its focus on blood and maturity.[41] Figures 6 and 7 exemplify a strong tendency in the Truku War postcards and other comparable sets to visually document the production of new social and spatial relations in the savage border. Such exhibitions of military proficiency and organisation are thus linked through photography to the necropolitical violence of reterritorialisation – that is, the project of implementing and sustaining hierarchies of difference through the oppression of the Taiwanese landscape.[42]

Following the failure of the Five-Year Plan to achieve a total conquest and survey of Taiwan's aborigine territories, visual commemorations of the Truku War were required to aggrandise the success of the punitive expedition in furthering the reach of scientific colonialism. Figure 8 is the standout example of triumphalist photography in the Truku War set, depicting the ceremonial march of the expeditionary forces through a "Triumphal Arch" that had been specifically constructed in Puli, the nearest township to the Taroko highlands, to herald the Japanese victory. With clear references to

[41] Michael Weiner, ''Self' and 'other' in imperial Japan' in Weiner, ed., *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity* (Abingdon, 2009), 1-2, 7-9, 15.

[42] Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', 25-26.

western militarism, the regiment conveys assuredness and discipline as it marches to the sound of bugles, conspicuously paralleled by railway tracks and overhead power lines that point clearly to the achievements of modernisation. This scene may be far from the mountain peaks that witnessed the Truku 'incident', but its promise of the fruits of scientific colonialism – and the necessity of a military operation to deliver those fruits – is conveyed unambiguously on the postcard.

Conclusion

Using the commemorative military postcards as a distinctive visual record of Japanese rule in Taiwan, the preceding analysis of scientific colonialism in its multi-scalar contexts helps us locate the violence of the Truku-Japanese War at the intersection of knowledge and power on the island colony, where a blend of local, national and transimperial conditions gave shape to necropolitical hierarchies that dictated who and what was expendable in the imperial pursuit of modernity and civilisation.

Alongside a wide range of official and semi-official archiving practices undertaken during the Japanese occupation, the Truku War postcards contributed to the violent coercion of the indigenous other by providing an ontological basis for their obliteration. Though we can only attempt a rough sketch of the chains of causation at play in the complex realm of culture and discourse, it is worth highlighting the specific role played by postcard photography as the foremost visual medium that propagated and inflected the iconography of Taiwan's authentic indigeneity. By situating 'timeless savages' among autochthonous landscapes and providing a visual ordering of their place within the fantasies of colonial knowledge, the picture postcard made a crucial intervention in the construction of indigenous Taiwanese identity.

But the timeless savage need not be alive – especially if a 'simulacrum' of ancient Taiwan can be sustained authentically in visual culture. The allochronic nature of the anthropological gaze in Japanese postcard photography was particularly important in exploring the ambiguity inherent to the othering of the indigenous: the tension between their *discursive* objectification as a fantasy of the imperial archive and their *material* objectification as a physical repository of wealth and other colonial desires. This tension is eased in the Truku War set by photographic realism and the choreographed presence of Japanese soldiers in most of the frames, but it was the *conjunction* of this photography with military violence that paved the way for both forms of objectification to be sustained as far as they were useful to the project of scientific colonialism. Archived into posterity and violently displaced from their ancestral ways of life, the indigenous other was thus pacified and instrumentalised to encourage intra-imperial tourism and maintain the legitimacy of Japan's civilising mission on the global stage, no longer impeding the modernising and civilising project of scientific colonialism.

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