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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

East Asian Languages and Cultures

History and Context: Late Meiji (1905-1912) Narratives of the Imjin War (1592-8)

by

Brian N. Heise

A master's thesis presented to
The Graduate School
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
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May 2017

Chapter 1: Inroduction

> Around the time of the campaign of Meiji 27-8 (1894-5), my school life had just ended – 1894 began and I had just stepped out into the world. But, to speak of how I felt at that time about the Japan-Qing campaign, I was extremely worried about whether we would win or lose. Would Japan succeed, I worried, or would we end up like the Taikō Hideyoshi, a disaster? I think many people were probably thinking the same thing.
>
> Ōmori Kingorō, 1915[1]

Ōmori Kingorō's (1867-1937) thoughts about the Japan-Qing campaign, or the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) as it is commonly known today, speak volumes about the zeitgeist of Japan's Meiji period (1868-1912). Although Meiji was a time of forward thinking as policy makers, businessmen, social elites, and the average citizen alike thought deeply about the country's future, as Ōmori's words indicate, it was also a time for retrospection. Indeed, although in that time Japan experienced transformations that took the country in new directions – the change of government, the integration of industrial technology, and the rapid influx of Western culture – the projection of power onto the continent that was the hallmark of Meiji foreign policy was in some respects a repetition of the past, calling to mind Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-98) and the previous time a Japanese state had attempted to exert its might outside of its borders: the Imjin War (1592-98).

That conflict, though a failure, was devastating for Joseon Korea (1392-1897). In April of 1592, Hideyoshi's troops landed on the peninsula and quickly slashed their way from the southern coast the northern border in a matter of months, leaving devastation in their wake, with the largely unprepared and poorly equipped Korean military standing little chance against a Japanese military armed with muskets and hardened by more than a century of warfare. However,

[1] Ōmori, 252.

due in large part to the intervention of the armies of Ming China (1369-1644) and the exploits of the Joseon navy, Hideyoshi's armies withdrew to the south in 1593. After a period of negotiations from 1594-96 ended in failure, a punitive expedition was launched, laying waste to the southern provinces for a second time. Upon Hideyoshi's death in 1598, his troops were withdrawn and until the Meiji era approximately 350 years later, the Japanese state made no further attempts to exert political influence on the continent.

The Meiji period saw an end to this period of disinterest in continental affairs: not long after the US navy forced Japan into the international world order, the new Meiji government began initiating an active foreign policy characterized by increasingly overt attempts to achieve political authority in Korea and China. As early as the 1870s, Japanese officials had already debated invading Korea as a punitive response to a perceived slight to the nation's honor.[2] Later, in 1894-5 and 1904-5 the Meiji government fought and won two wars with Qing China and Czarist Russia respectively, in both cases regarding Japan's authority over the Korean peninsula. Furthermore in 1895, the Japanese military orchestrated an assassination of a pro-Russian Korean queen and, in 1910, with the signing of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty, the peninsula fell under de-facto control of the Japanese government. As these incidents indicate, the extension of political influence onto the continent was a major facet of Meiji-period foreign policy.

Although Ōmori drew an association between Hideyoshi's invasions and the Sino-Japanese War, the foreign policy of both the Meiji government and Hideyoshi's regime invite comparison in their individual characteristics and in the broader context of Japanese history. In the case of their characteristics, both featured a leadership that desired to exert authority on the

[2] Ravina, 180.

continent, both involved military conflict with continental states, and both involved the fate of Korea. In Japanese history as a whole, there are not many other examples of Japanese states engaging in this kind of action on the continent. Aside from some mythologized invasions of Korea from before written records appeared in Japan and some military assistance rendered to the kingdom of Baekche (18 BCE – 660 CE) in the early centuries CE, the only two examples available by the end of the Meiji period were the policies of the last few decades and the Imjin War. Ōmori was probably right when he suggested that he was not the only one to make such an association. What might such people have had to say about that earlier war, given the decades of Meiji foreign policy that they had just experienced? The goal of the present essay is to investigate this question. The following chapters present an examination of five books published in the last years of the Meiji period, from 1905 to 1912, to determine what their authors had to say about the Imjin War and to examine how their narratives reflect the context in which they were written. In so doing, this essay reveals some ways in which recent events can shape perceptions of the past.

The narratives considered here are all drawn from books published in the period from 1905 to 1912, or in other words from the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War to the end of the Meiji era. The reasons for this choice are at once symbolic and also practical. Practically speaking, this period takes place after decades of Meiji foreign policy, giving ample time for writers to have developed new ideas about Hideyoshi and his invasions based on this new context. Given that a major goal of this essay is to identify aspects of these narratives that can be attributed to the circumstances of the Meiji period, books written at this time are an ideal place to look. Symbolically, this period also straddles the annexation of Korea, which occurred in 1910. The significance of this event is that, just over three hundred years after Hideyoshi failed to

conquer Korea, the Meiji government bloodlessly brought the peninsula under its control. Those writing after the annexation would have particular cause to re-think the Imjin War.

In general, works examined here will be presented in chronological order, beginning with the earliest works and progressing to the later. However, in the case of multiple works written by the same author, they are considered together in the same chapter (see Table 1 on page 6 for a complete list of works). Chapter 2 provides an overview of contemporary scholarship of the period in question to provide a standard to which to compare the following works. Chapter 3 considers three books by Itō Gingetsu, a newspaper reporter, novelist, and commentator with a nationalist bent who took a stance in praise of Hideyoshi and antagonistic to China. Chapter 4 considers Kemuyama Sentarō's *The True Affairs of the Invade Korea Debate*, which traces the origins of the issues associated with the 1870s debates within the Meiji government about invading Korea and includes brief discussions of Hideyoshi and the Imjin war in this context. Chapter 5 discusses the two chapters of Okuda Naoki's *Ancient Traces of Korea and Japan*, a collection of articles that the author wrote while living in Korea and that were originally published serially in the Seoul Daily newspaper. Chapter 6 covers the works of Hayashi Taisuke, a professionally trained historian and graduate of Waseda University, a writer who stands out for his relative objectivity compared to the other authors examined here. Finally, the concluding Chapter 7 contains an analysis of the overall features of Imjin War narratives in this time and highlights important distinctions from work to work.

In analyzing the above works, this essay focuses predominantly on two factors: the way that the author narrates the events and the author's analysis of those events. In the first category, the primary consideration is how the presentation of events might affect the reader's attitudes towards the various parties involved, China, Korea, Japan, or individual actors such as Hideyoshi

himself. To this end, this essay examines which facts are included and which are excluded, and also whether or not the author makes dubious claims. In the second category, the essay deconstructs the authors' analyses to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, in the process, the analysis also identifies the author's own attitudes towards those involved in the conflict and considers how the socio-political situation in the Meiji period may have influenced them.

Given the broad scope of the Imjin War, however, this essay examines only the narratives regarding the prelude to the war. Although this is an artificial constraint, the length of the conflict and its related events necessitates this truncation: between the two separate invasions 1592-3 and 1597-8, the interim period of peace negotiations, and the eight or more years of planning, preparation, and communication between Hideyoshi's regime and other regional powers, a complete analysis of every detail of the war could fill an entire volume. The choice of the prelude over an even-by-event analysis of the entire war provides a distinct advantage: the prelude offers the author a chance to lay blame for the conflict, which is a perfect chance for the author to reveal his attitudes towards the involved parties.

Table 1 – Survey of Works, organized by topic

Category Distinctions				
Category 1	Category 2	Title	Author	Year
Korea-focused books	Histories of the Imjin War	*Ancient Traces of Korea and Japan* (日韓古跡)	Okuda Naoki	1910
	General Histories of Korea	*An Historical Overview of History of Korea* (朝鮮通史)	Hayashi Taisuke	1912
		Early Modern Joseon History (朝鮮近世史).	Hayashi Taisuke	1911
		The True Affairs of the Invade Korea Debate (征韓論實相)	Kemuyama Sentarō	1907
Japan-focused books	Topical Histories	*Japan, Country of the Sea* (海国日本)	Itō Gingetsu	1905
		A History of Japanese Piracy (日本海賊史)	Itō Gingetsu	1906
	Biographies of Hideyoshi	*Hideyoshi in His Later Years* (晩年の秀吉)	Itō Gingetsu	1911

Chapter 2: Overview of Contemporary Narratives

The following is a summary of the events comprising the prelude to the war, from Hideyoshi's first recorded plans for the invasion in 1585 until troops landed at Busan in April, 1592. This, though heavily documented in Japanese, Korean, and Chinese sources alike, nonetheless leaves some points unsettled due to conflicting sources and the fact that few scholars have mastered the various languages in which these documents are recorded. As such, the following summary should not be taken as a settled view. Any major discrepancies between the sources considered here are indicated in the footnotes.

The first extant record of Hideyoshi's desire to invade the continent appears in 1585 – several years before he had even finished uniting Japan – in a letter to one of his vassals, in which he mentions his eventual plan to attack the Ming. Over the course of the next seven years, he would develop this idea, a process Samuel Hawley, Kitajima Manji, and Kenneth M. Swope each summarize in their respective monographs about the war.[1] A 1586 letter first mentions Joseon as a target of invasion as well, and a 1587 letter expresses his plan to order the King of Joseon to submit to him and to only invade if he refuses. By 1588, the plan further expanded as Hideyoshi expressed a desire to make Joseon, the "various southern barbarian countries" (南蛮

[1] Hawley, 21.
Kitajima, 14-15.
Swope, 51-2.

諸国),[2] and Ryūkyū (modern day Okinawa) yield allegiance to him. By 1591, he was mobilizing troops and gathering supplies, and building a castle in Nagoya as his headquarters.

The narrative of the prelude centers around Hideyoshi's negotiations with the various regional powers, including the kingdom of Ryūkyū, the Portuguese outpost at Luzon in the Philippines, and the Joseon dynasty on the Korean peninsula. The focus was placed on those with Joseon as they were the most extensive and because the war would eventually be fought on the Korean peninsula. Of the former two, Hideyoshi sent word to both of his plans to invade the Ming and demanded their allegiance and support in the coming war. Of these, the Portuguese responded affirmatively, offering to send two warships and crews to man them;[3] Ryūkyū, being a loyal tributary state of the Ming, immediately sent word to the emperor.[4] This message would lead to mistrust arising between the Ming and Joseon due to the fact that the Joseon court would be delayed in sending word themselves due to factional disagreements.

The narratives of the exchanges between the Joseon court and Hideyoshi in this period contain many of the most serious conflicts in the contemporary sources here considered. In 1586 Hideyoshi ordered the lord of Tsuhima, Sō Yoshishige (1532-1588), to send an envoy to Korea with a message. Sources vary on the exact message that was sent,[5] but it likely called for the Joseon court to send an envoy to Japan without overt statements about plans for war. However, between the rudeness of the head envoy, the arrogant language in which the letter was written, and the Joseon court's belief that Hideyoshi had committed regicide (a serious moral offense at

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[2] Hideyoshi was probably referring to Southeast Asia.
[3] Kitajima, 16.
[4] Swope, 62.
[5] Swope writes that the purpose was to inform them of his plans to invade Ming, as well as to ask them to be guides on the road and to assist in the attack (Swope, 53); Kitajima states that Hideyoshi's demand at this time was that Joseon send an envoy to Japan or face retribution (Kitajima, 16); Hawley concurs with Kitajima, but adds that Hideyoshi's demand was specifically for a "tribute mission" and that Yoshishige changed the wording to "goodwill mission" to make the message more palatable (Hawley, 78).

this time), they ultimately declined to send the envoy, giving the excuse that they were uncertain of the sea route.[6]

Hideyoshi, furious at the failure of his mission, executed the head of the envoy and his entire family.[7] Later, in March 1589, a second mission to was sent to Joseon, this time headed by several figures who will become quite important later in the events of the war: Yoshishige's heir Sō Yoshitoshi (1568-1615), the monk-diplomat Keitetsu Genso (1537-1611), and Yanegawa Shigenobu (d. 1605).[8] Arriving in Seoul, Yoshitoshi attempted to counter their earlier excuse about the uncertainty of the route by suggesting that he would personally lead the Joseon envoy back to Kyoto. In response, the Joseon court stated that it would consider sending a mission to Japan if Yoshitoshi were able to capture some wanted pirates and return them to face justice. Yoshitoshi complied[9] and in September of 1589 the Joseon court finally agreed to send the envoy, although the purpose was notably to congratulate Hideyoshi for unifying Japan rather than to submit to him.

The account of the meeting between Hideyoshi and the envoy is perhaps one of the most oft repeated: it was a brief and simple affair, after which Hideyoshi reported changed into informal dress and wandered around the hall with his newborn child, who proceeded to urinate on him in front of everyone. This lack of decorum scandalized the envoy, but what shocked them more was the contents of Hideyoshi's letter addressed to the Joseon king, which they would receive some time later. Aside from again using extremely arrogant language, it unequivocally

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[6] Kitajima, 20.

[7] Kitajima, 20. A notable discrepancy in the narrative here can be found in Swope's account. He writes that Hideyoshi sent 26 ships to probe the waters around Korea, that some skirmishes resulted, leading to a few deaths and a sunken ship on the Korean side. He also writes of a second envoy to Joseon sent late in 1587 that was also ignored (Swope, 53). Neither Hawley nor Kitajima mention these events.

[8] Kitajima, 21.

[9] Swope suggests that the people Yoshitoshi brought before the court may have not been the actual people that were sought, (Swope, 54).

stated Hideyoshi's plan to invade Ming, together with his demand that Joseon allow him to use their roads, act as guides, and even to participate in the war. This letter led to great partisan conflict in Seoul as the two main factions in the government debated how to respond, with one side arguing that Hideyoshi would not really attack and the other advocating the necessity of military preparation. Ultimately, some preparation was initiated, though it proved insufficient: in the April of 1592, Hideyoshi's armies landed at Busan and within a few short months had cut a path across the peninsula to the Yalu River, the border between Joseon and Ming.

Chapter 3: Itō Gingetsu and the Manifestly Miraculous Taikō

The first writer considered here is one Itō Gingetsu, a prolific writer with more than 100 titles attributed to him in the National Diet Library of Japan's catalogue.[1] Despite the quantity of his work, little information is readily available about him; however, he was born in 1874 and died in 1944, hailed from Akita province, and was known as a commentator, novelist, and newspaper reporter.[2] According to the database Japan Knowledge, he is known for his unique compositions and anti-modern attitude, and he wrote in a wide variety of genres, including fiction, criticism, travel writings, and history. There is no indication that he was a formally trained historian: according to one source, he quit middle school at the age of seventeen and moved to Tokyo, and only after moving around to various parts of the city for ten years did he become employed as a newspaper reporter,[3] and no source suggests that he went back to school for formal training as a historian. Given this information, one should view his writings about the war as popular histories, a sort likely to reflect popular attitudes but perhaps less likely to strive for the level objectivity that one might expect from academic work.

Three of Itō's books that were published in the period 1905-1912 contain narratives and arguments about the Imjin War: *Japan, Country of the Sea* (海国日本, 1905), *A History of Japanese Piracy* (日本海賊史, 1906), and *Hideyoshi in His Later Years* (晩年の秀吉, 1911),

[1] Many of this number are likely reprintings as the Diet Library database counts multiple editions as separate works; however, even given that possibility, we can still conclude that his books were very popular if they were to have had so many reprintings to yield such a large number in the database.
[2] Kodansha, "伊藤銀月."
[3] Shibunkaku, 伊藤銀月."

which are examined in chronological order. None of these books take the invasion itself as a central topic; however, each one does contain at least one chapter or section that deals with the war specifically. Itō's treatment of the war sets itself apart from most due to his difference in emphasis – whereas most authors writing on the war concern themselves with the events on the continent and the negotiations among Japan, Joseon, and the Ming, Itō focuses in the former two of his books on naval concerns and in the latter work on the person of Hideyoshi himself. Given this difference in emphasis, his narratives and arguments differ quite a lot from the others, both of his contemporaries and ours. In general, his narratives contain unlikely claims, anti-Chinese attitudes, and positive views of Hideyoshi.

The first of these books is entitled *Japan, Country of the Sea*, a history of Japan centered around the country's connection to the sea, and is a work with a clearly enunciated bent towards the idea of Japanese exceptionalism and is anticipates the *nihonjinron* genre. As suggested by the title, the underlying thesis of this book is what he sees as the unique characteristics of the Japanese people deriving from their proximity to the sea. He writes, "The land of Japan came to be according to what? The character of the Japanese people was created according to what? A particular thing must arise from a particular thing – if there is a result there must of necessity be a cause. It is in order that I shall make clear this cause that I write *Japan, Country of the Sea*."[4] Though he stops short of saying explicitly, the implication is clear: the Japanese people are particular – read: exceptional – and this exceptionality arises from the sea. This aim strongly shapes his discussion of the Imjin War, in which he focuses exclusively on naval concerns, with an emphasis on tactics and technology. *Japan, Country of the Sea* does not consider Hideyoshi or

[4] Itō, *Country of the Sea,* 1.

the prelude to the war and therefore will not be considered further. It does, however, provide evidence for Itō's nationalism.

The next book is *A History of Japanese Piracy*, published one year later. True to its namesake, this book details the activities of Japanese pirates (JP *wakō*, KR *waegu*, CH *wōkòu*) from the legendary foundation of the Japanese state until the Edo period, with emphasis on individual personages and their own pirate activities or their connection to piracy in general. One might question why a book about piracy would contain a chapter dealing with Hideyoshi's invasions of Korea since scholars today consider it a military action. Although Itō himself does not answer this question directly, his reasoning is apparent in his choice of terminology: he consistently uses the Korean designation for the war, *waeran* (JP *waran* 倭亂), which literally translates as "Japanese disturbance," but which historically refers to pirate raids. In contrast, other Japanese sources written around the same time (and many today as well) tend to refer to the invasion as *shinryaku* (invasion, 侵略), *seifuku* (conquest, 征服), or *seibatsu* (punitive expedition, 征伐). Thus, in referring to Hideyoshi's invasion by this term, Itō's reasoning becomes clear: the Imjin War is classed with pirate raids as a Japanese attack on the mainland rather than a separate category of event, as contemporary historians tend to designate it.

Itō's narrative of the war takes a very different orientation in this book than in his previous book: whereas the first book focused on technological and tactical concerns, this one considers the question of responsibility, and in so doing reveals a critical view of China. According to Itō, the blame for the war falls squarely on the shoulders of the Ming dynasty, asserting that they gave an affront to Hideyoshi that enraged him such that retribution was

natural.[5] According to Itō, at some point in the late 16th century (no date is provided, but it likely would have occurred after 1582, when Hideyoshi succeeded his predecessor Oda Nobunaga), the Ming government ordered Hideyoshi to suppress piracy and Hideyoshi responded by issuing an edict to put that command into effect.[6] According to Itō, Hideyoshi was completely successful, writing, "The Taikō's thunderous roar caused all the pirates of Japan to hold their breath, making the Chinese continent to be free for the first time from the anxiety of pirate raids (倭亂)."[7] From here, his tone turns indignant.

> The Ming ruler was pleased, and for this reason he gave thanks to the *jiāomiào* (郊廟)[8] and received the praise of crowds of his subjects; but how is it that he did not direct a single word of thanks to us? The fact that not a second pirate raid (*waran*, 倭亂) arrived was not by the grace of their *jiāomiào* but the grace of our Highness the Taikō. Thanking the *jiāomiào*, which lacked any miraculous efficacy and not thanking His Highness the manifestly miraculous Taikō – what an affront! […] Well, regarding that affair, like a demon god [Hideyoshi] raised a fearful great raid (*dai-waran,* 大倭亂) ten times that of a [normal] raid, and truly the dreadfulness of the Japanese would penetrate to marrow of the bone, and make them not forget the error of having scorned us.[9]

Itō's narrative, then, is clear: the Ming ordered Hideyoshi to suppress piracy, Hideyoshi did so, the Ming offered no thanks for his efforts, and so he set out to punish them. Beyond this, he has nothing more to say on the topic.

The narrative that Itō provides here is immediately suspect to one who is familiar with contemporary scholarship on this topic. Of the sources overviewed in Chapter 2, none mention

[5] Itō himself stops short of saying "natural" explicitly; however, his language implies that he sees no problem with Hideyoshi's response – that is to say, he gives no negative judgment to it.
[6] Itō, *Japanese Piracy*, 116.
[7] Ibid., 119.
[8] The word *jiāomiào* carries a variety of possible meanings and it is not readily apparent which one Itō is intending here, so I have left the word untranslated. According to one dictionary, this word may refer to the location where the Chinese emperor worships and makes sacrifices to Heaven and Earth or to his ancestors, but it could by association also refer to the act of such worship or even just to the polity of the state. Given Itō's negative attitude toward China, it seems reasonable to assume that he his indicating worship of the occult, but this is difficult to conclude with certainty.
[9] Ibid., 119.

either a Ming command to end piracy, nor do they mention Hideyoshi's suppression of piracy or his ire at not receiving thanks for it.[10] Hawley and Swope consider Hideyoshi's motivations at length, but do not mention piracy.[11] Swope in particular, being a scholar of Ming China, would be in the best position to have some awareness of such a command on the part of the Ming, so that fact that he does not mention it provides even more reason to suspect the veracity of this narrative. One further place to look for any mention of this would be Hideyoshi's own writings, yet of the sources listed by both Hawley and Kitajima, none mention precisely why China was his ultimate goal. Given the lack of support in contemporary scholarship, Itō's claim is doubtful.

There are two ways that to read Itō's narrative. On the one hand, one may assume it to be a complete fabrication, a flight of fancy perhaps or just an inference that he made without regard to the sources. On the other, one may give him the benefit of the doubt and surmise that he had access to sources that scholars today do not. In Itō's favor, the extant sources do not offer any explicit explanations of Hideyoshi's reasoning, leaving scholars to speculate as to why he decided to engage in a foreign invasion. It may therefore be a useful project for scholars of the Imjin War to investigate his claims. A good start would be to locate the edict that Hideyoshi supposedly issued for pirate suppression, which Itō quotes directly in the book,[12] and also to search for any record of the Ming command supposedly issued to Hideyoshi calling him to suppress the pirates. That said, there is ample evidence to cast doubt upon this narrative as well. First and foremost, there is the question of timing. The edict that Itō quotes regarding pirate suppression is dated to the year Tenshō 27, or 1589 – four years after Hideyoshi's first recorded statements about invading the Ming. If one accepts, then, that Hideyoshi was already planning to

[10] Robinson, for example, includes an entire section on piracy in his essay "Violence, Trade, and Imposters," but makes no mention of such a command from the Ming or any mention of any pirate suppression that Hideyoshi might have done (Robinson 2015).
[11] Swope, 63-67; Hawley, 22-25.
[12] See Itō, *Japanese Piracy*, 116.

invade the Ming in 1585, one cannot claim that the Ming's failure to praise him for his suppression of pirates in 1589 be anything more than an excuse, assuming that there is any truth to this claims at all. If one were to believe that Hideyoshi's motivation was what Itō says it was, then Hideyoshi must have received the command at least several years before 1585 in order to have had time to issue the edict, enforce it, and then to have given up waiting for thanks. Seeing as Hideyoshi had not finished uniting Japan until the 1591 Kyushu expedition, it is further questionable whether, even if the Ming did send such a message, they would have known who to send it to. Still, even if this is an unsatisfactory explanation for Hideyoshi's desire to invade, such a command may still have been issued and by some fashion it may have been passed to him, and the edict quoted in the text may also be authentic; as these details would be relevant context for the war and given the fact that no mention of them appears in contemporary narratives, it therefore still a worthwhile project to investigate.

Regarding the question of blame for the war, from what we have seen Itō clearly places the onus on the Ming for not thanking Hideyoshi for suppressing piracy and excuses Hideyoshi's invasion by implying that it was justified. The place of Korea in this narrative, however, is minimal, in spite of the fact that it was the land that was devastated by two invasions. All that he does is give a cursory explanation as to why Korea was involved at all. He writes, "As for the fact that he first faced Joseon, it was just to try to penetrate from the main gate (正門) and drive off the guards."[13] In other words, it was only that Joseon stood between Hideyoshi and the Ming – it was not because Joseon themselves had done any wrong nor was it that Hideyoshi harbored any ill will toward them. In this narrative, then, Korea is peripheral, hardly worthy of discussion at all.

[13] Itō, *A History of Japanese Piracy*, 120.

In sum, in this book Itō presents a rather dubious but nonetheless unique perspective on the war. He provides a narrative that is unlike anything found at other works either of his contemporaries or of ours, and given the facts contained in more recent narratives, his claims about Hideyoshi's motivations are almost certainly false, though some substance of the narrative may be true but unconfirmed as yet. Next, however, we turn to his 1911 book, *Hideyoshi in His Later Years* (晩年の秀吉), in which he expands upon what he presented in his this book.

Hideyoshi in His Later Years is part three of a three part biography of Hideyoshi, including the titles *Hideyoshi in His Early Years* (青年の秀吉) and *Hideyoshi in His Middle Years* (中年の秀吉). In the introduction to the first book in the series, Itō presents this biography as an answer to the writings that came before – specifically, he says that he intends to write a history that moves beyond the legends and stories to find historical truth, interestingly echoing Kuwata Tadachika's characterization of Meiji period writings on Hideyoshi, written some forty years later.[14] As we shall see from his discussion of the Imjin War contained in *Hideyoshi in His Later Years*, which covers his exploits from the subjugation of Kyushu in 1587 until his death in 1598, he indeed continues to express concern for historical fact, but we can nonetheless see a narrative tainted with nationalist sentiments and questionable analysis.

In this book Itō, for all his talk about searching for historical fact, nonetheless continues his habit from earlier books of speaking of Hideyoshi in glowing terms (recall his words from *History of Japanese Piracy*: "his Highness the manifestly miraculous Taikō"). This is evidenced by his frequent use of words incorporating the character *yū* (雄), which indicates superiority or excellence with associations to masculinity, to describe Hideyoshi and his actions. To name just

[14] Itō, *Early Years*, 3-4; Kuwata, 11.

a few, he refers to Hideyoshi as a great man (英雄), he is possesses a heroic spirit (雄心), and his plot to invade Korea is a grand plan (雄圖). Beyond this terminology, he also has a tendency to wax poetic, as we see in the introduction of *Hideyoshi in His Later Years*, in which he likens the last years of his life to bright and windy winter evening, a beautiful scene replete with red, gold, and purple colors – an interesting choice to describe a man who would command the armies that would kill, according to some estimates, a tenth of the Korean population.[15] This adulatory language signals immediately that the reader should be wary of bias, a necessity that is born out in his discussion of the Imjin War.

Turning to the chapter of this book that concerns the war, entitled "Hideyoshi's Deeds as a Great Man" (英雄としての秀吉の事業), Itō provides a much more detailed narrative that incorporates and expands upon what he wrote in *Japanese Piracy*. The focus of this chapter, as in the earlier book, is on the causes for the war and, as before, he does repeat the claim that Hideyoshi invaded because the Ming refused to thank him for suppressing piracy. However, while this claim was the primary reason listed, in this book he considers it only as a subsidiary reason among many others. In the course of the chapter he considers three explanations for Hideyoshi's motivation for the war, offers criticism of each, and then provides his own explanation. This explanation, as illustrated below, casts the invasion as the result of natural processes rather than as the result of the Ming emperor have spurned Hideyoshi.

Itō's criticism deals with three explanations of Hideyoshi's motivations for his invasions. The first of these is an obviously lengendarized tale regarding the birth and death of Hideyoshi's beloved heir. So the story goes, Hideyoshi was elated at the birth of his son, but upon the child's

[15] Itō, *Later Years*, 1-2.

death less than a year later, he was beset by such sadness that he abdicated the position of *taikō* (regent) and retired as *kampaku* (chief advisor). However, looking out on the four compass directions from a high place while on a pilgrimage to Kiyomizu, his heroic spirit (雄心) suddenly returned and he determined to engage in his life's greatest work – the invasion of Ming.[16] The second explanation is that Hideyoshi believed that after so many years of warfare, the people of Japan were infused with a savage spirit (殺伐の気) and so were not ready for peace. In order exhaust that spirit and allow peace in Japan, he sent his armies abroad.[17] The third explanation is that, since contact between Japan, Korea, and the continent [i.e. China] had historically been strong (between trade and pirate raids), Japan had a good understanding of the situation on the mainland: namely, Korea was a weak country that would go down with one blow, and that China was large and apparently formidable, yet weak.[18] According to this narrative, author writes, in these circumstances Hideyoshi's plan to invade was only following the natural course of events (自然の勢いに順う).[19]

Itō, however, is critical of each of these explanations – as well he should be – though his criticisms can be elaborated on and further corrected in the light of contemporary scholarship. Regarding the first reason he cited, we should first note that none of the contemporary scholars cited in this essay include such an explanation, indicating that they either are not aware of it or do not take it as a serious possibility. Itō himself criticizes it, suggesting that it originated in Tokugawa period as an attempt to weaken Hideyoshi's image; although this interpretation is difficult to verify, it does match with Kuwata Tadachika's evaluation of Edo period writings. As

[16] Ibid., 140-142.
[17] Ibid., 142.
[18] He uses the same expression to refer to China's large size which belied its weakness here as he did in the previous work, *udo no daiboku* (独活の大木).
[19] Ibid., 142-43.

he notes in his study of historical sources about Hideyoshi, *Research on the Records of the Taikō*, it was not uncommon for official documents to attempt to diminish his legacy.[20] Given the nature of the story, which on the surface does strike one as being much more intimate than a typical record would be, a search for the origin of this story should begin in the Tokugawa period. It is reasonable, in the absence of additional evidence, to concur with Itō that this explanation is likely a fabrication. In this case, his concern for historical truth is supported.

The second point he dismisses rather briefly, saying only that "it is an old-fashioned observation that is only reasoned out [i.e. without tangible evidence]."[21] This is curious criticism for two reasons. In the first place, he is certainly right to suggest that it is old fashioned (舊式): Swope includes a similar explanation in his list of motivations attributed to Hideyoshi during the Edo period, though in his characterization it was more about "weakening rivals and exhausting their fighting strength" rather than a need to pacify the people of Japan as a whole.[22] However, old-fashioned as it may be, only this explanation in any way resembles explanations that contemporary scholars seriously consider today. Swope and Hawley, for example, gives a similar explanation, reasoning that Hideyoshi's strategy of winning rival *daimyo* to his side by offering rewards of land would lead to dissatisfaction and possible revolt once no more land remained to offer; for this reason, they suggest, Hideyoshi extended his conquest to foreign lands in order to continue providing such rewards.[23] True to Itō's criticism of his version of this explanation, these recent positions are nothing more than the result of logical speculation – neither author cites any sources to confirm, but only makes educated guesses based on their knowledge of the circumstances. Regardless, in the interest of Imjin War narratives, this particular explanation is

[20] Kuwata, 7.
[21] Itō, *Later Years*, 144.
[22] Swope, 65.
[23] Hawley, 22. Swope quotes Hawley on this, (Swope, 65).

noteworthy for its staying power – although the particulars have evolved over the years, similar explanations have been considered reasonable over centuries of scholarship. It appears, then, that Itō was somewhat hasty in dismissing it, though his criticism is still certainly valid.

As for the third explanation, in contrast to the second, Itō does show some affirmative, albeit limited, support and yet it has some serious problems that he does not acknowledge. To reiterate, this one held that Hideyoshi was aware of the weakness of Ming and Joseon and it was therefore only natural that he attack. Regarding Itō's own support and criticism, he writes that "it is such that we could call it a new-style historian's[24] perspective," but in the next stroke of his pen says that "it can do no more than paint a silhouette."[25] If Itō means that this is only a small part of the whole story, then this is valid as an influence on Hideyoshi's decision although be more accurate one must amend his position by stating that Hideyoshi may have at least *thought* that these two were weak since it is unclear exactly how accurate his knowledge was, especially in the case of the Ming (he certainly learned something of the state of Joseon from his envoys starting in the late 1580s).

Contemporary scholarship does indicate that the internal conditions of Joseon did make the kingdom susceptible to invasion, and though scholars disagree about the degree of weakness in of the Ming, it too is thought to have been in a weak state as well,[26] but how much Hideyoshi actually knew and how accurate that information was is an open question. Contemporary scholars have not given much attention to this topic, but later in this chapter, Itō himself does provide one piece of supporting evidence for the extent of Hideyoshi's knowledge: a report

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[24] By "new-style historian," Itō is referring to the Western style of historiography popularized in Japan during the Meiji period that emphasized the search for historical fact based on evidence and eschewing the liberties that earlier writers took when writing about historical topics.
[25] Itō, *Later Years*, 144.
[26] For more information on the internal conditions Ming, see Swope, 13-40 and Hawley, 26-47. For Joseon, see Swope 69-74 and Hawley 52-72.

brought to him by a former pirate. According to Itō, this man told Hideyoshi that, "Ming fears Japan as it would a tiger. I think it would be even easier to take that country than it would be to overturn your palm."[27] Both Hawley and Swope reference this same text, so it would be reasonable to assume that this story is credible, but given Hideyoshi's failure, the pirate's testimony was not credible. That said, if we amend the argument to the point of saying merely that Hideyoshi *thought* that Ming was weak, then indeed this explanation may be valid, but only insofar as Itō himself qualifies this argument: it is just a small part of the bigger picture.

These three explanations are consistent with the narrative Itō presented previously in *A History of Japanese Piracy*. If we recall, in that work, the cause of the war was attributed to Hideyoshi's desire to chastise the Ming for failing to thank him for putting an end to the pirate raids (a charge which he also repeats briefly later in the chapter).[28] If we take these four explanations together, two common features are apparent. First, they all center on the person of Hideyoshi and they all emphasize Ming as the target. In the first case, Hideyoshi, though portrayed in a very human fashion, nonetheless has his heroic spirit awakened by a beautiful view, inspiring him to do his life's great work. In the second, the decision is because of his shrewdness as a leader of Japan. In the third case, it is because he possessed knowledge of his neighbors' weakness and hoped to exploit it. Finally, in the last case, Hideyoshi executes a chastisement for the sake of punishing a slight against Japan. Each of these, then, can be categorized under the Great Man Theory of history, and they all in their own way emphasize Hideyoshi the person over other explanations. This emphasis on Hideyoshi promotes an image of Japan as a powerful nation: Hideyoshi is the subject that acts upon others but is not acted upon.

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[27] Itō, *Later Years*, 153.
[28] Ibid., 152.

There is, of course, one problem with emphasizing Hideyoshi's agency in the light of Meiji period politics: though it does emphasize Japan's status as a great nation vicariously through Hideyoshi, it does run the risk of casting a negative light upon the country by suggesting that they were barbaric, warlike aggressors. However, Itō's narrative does contain elements to exonerate Japan of this possible charge. In *A History of Japanese Piracy*, Itō suggests that Hideyoshi was justified in his assault on the Ming because they insulted him; in explanation three in *Hideyoshi in His Later Years*, we see another such example when he suggests that Hideyoshi was only following the natural course of events. However, as noted, Itō does think that all of these explanations miss the big picture. His explanation of this, as we shall see, will further deemphasize Japanese culpability.

What then, in Itō's mind, is the bigger picture? In his estimation, all three of the explanations are not incompatible with each other, but he believes that they can all be "reconciled and harmonized" under a broader explanation, and that being what he calls the "The Principle of Japanese Nation Building" (日本建国の主義).[29] He explains this principle as follows:

> "At times when the nation (国家) possess even a little surplus power, without fail it faces outward and carries out that principle. Even if the time is not one in which the nation possesses surplus power, if perhaps the people (国民) possess [such] surplus power, again without fail they face outward and fragmentarily carry out that principle. We can grasp this by the activities of our pirates against the continent and peninsula. Indeed, we must also deem Hideyoshi as well as having raised up the nation (国家) and made them issue forth grandly while following this trend.[30]

[29] To be clear on the translation of this phrase, the word *kenkoku* could be translated not only as "state-building" but also "nation-building." We should be careful about reading into this term any of the cultural baggage that these terms might carry.
[30] Itō, *Later Years*, 145-146.

In his perspective then, Japanese aggression against neighboring countries is the product of a natural process, outside the control of individuals – when Japan or anyone in Japan happens to have power, that power unavoidably pours outwards against Korea and China. One salient difference between this position and the earlier three is the question of responsibility. In all three of the earlier explanations, Hideyoshi possesses full agency and therefore fully responsible for the war. By making the invasion nothing more than a process of nature, it takes on the quality of a natural disaster, like an earthquake or a tsunami, rather than an act executed by a human being. This yet again takes focus away from Hideyoshi as the aggressor while at the same time preserving Hideyoshi's status as a great man: it was only natural that Hideyoshi extend his power outward, but it was precisely because he had that power that he did so.

One final note before concluding this study of Itō's writings is to note two additional motivations, which he mentions briefly at the end of this chapter. The first is that he was seeking retribution for the attempted invasion of Japan by the Yuan dynasty several centuries before, and also to reassert his claim from the previous book regarding the supposed Ming slight of not thanking him for putting an end to piracy.[31] He does, however, further assert that this was his *greatest motivation* for wanting to invade.[32] We can only speculate as to why he includes these two reasons so late in the chapter and with so little explanation – indeed, they seem to be barely more than an afterthought – but they nonetheless should be acknowledged. Little more needs to be said about the latter of these two explanations than what has already been written in this chapter, but regarding the Yuan invasion, the earliest reference was recorded in 1591 in *The*

[31] We should note that he amends his earlier claim by acknowledging that the fact that the Ming captured and executed Wang Zhi, the infamous pirate lord, also played a role. This suggests that his earlier assertion had been criticized and he thus amended his claim in this book.
[32] Itō, *Later Years*, 152.

Revised True Record of Seonjo of Joseon Dynasty (朝鮮王朝宣祖正実録).[33] In this account, the Japanese monk Keitetsu Genso cites this as a reason for Hideyoshi's invasion when questioned by a Joseon official while he was acting as an ambassador in Seoul. This position, noted in contemporary scholarship, is not considered seriously as a reason for the war and was likely fabricated by Genso. The uncritical inclusion of this dubious explanation is consistent with Itō's tendency to shift blame away from Hideyoshi, as we have seen him do repeatedly in this chapter.

To conclude, Itō Gingetsu's narratives conflict with each other, asserting on the one hand that the war was a justified response to Chinese actions, and on the other characterizing the invasion the result of a natural process. The common thread between these, however, is that they de-emphasizes Japanese responsibility for the war. In the former variety, Hideyoshi is justified because Japan was slighted; in the latter, Japan is not responsible because the invasions were the result of natural processes. Finally, another common aspect is the lack of emphasis put on Korea's role in the war: the peninsula is hardly mentioned at all in these discussions, except to assert that this was not the target. As we shall see, these positions were fairly common at this time.

[33] Quoted in Kitajima, 26.

Chapter 4: Kemuyama Sentarō

Next is Kemuyama Sentarō, an academic figure who sets quite a contrast to the popular writer Itō. Born in Iwate Prefecture in 1877, he studied both history and philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University (now Tokyo University), eventually graduating with a degree in philosophy. That same year he accepted a position at Waseda University, where he lectured on modern Western history and political history for more than four decades.[1] During his career he wrote many books on a variety of topics, including the one that we shall consider here, *The True Affairs of the Invade Korea Debate*, published in 1907.

As with Itō's works, in writing *The True Affairs,* Kemuyama Sentarō's primary concern is not the Imjin War; in this case, the topic is the *seikanron*, or Invade Korea Debate. This debate arose in 1873 when the leadership of the recently established Meiji government debated whether or not they should invade Korea as a response to a diplomatic affront. Some, including the head of the government Saigō Takamori, advocated responding with force; others, such as Okubo Toshimichi advocated that the government could not sustain a war and so should ignore the affront. In the end, though, the peace faction prevailed and the invasion was averted.[2] Although many studies of the events surrounding the *seikanron* exist today, at the time that Kemuyama was writing his book, many details remained unclear, and for this reason he wrote the book. In doing so, he goes beyond the immediate events, tracing its context to the earliest recorded history of Japan, summarizing Japan's relations with its neighbors and explaining how this history

[1] VOYAGE GROUP, Inc.
[2] Ravina, 179-182.

played into the debate and its outcome. Although the book only briefly discusses Hideyoshi and his invasions, his treatment of this nonetheless shows inconsistencies with the historical record, providing a narrative of the event that absolves both Japan and Korea for the war, tacitly placing the blame on Ming China.

The following is a translation of the relevant section.

> As soon as he unified the realm (天下), Toyotomi Hideyoshi, desiring to make new ties with foreign countries, dispatched Tachibana Yasuhiro, a man of Tsushima, to Korea (韓国) to demand tribute and, moreover, ordered him to endeavor toward friendship with the Ming. However, when they did not obey, Hideyoshi dispatched Sō Yoshitoshi, Yanegawa Shigenobu, and the monk Genso, who then persuaded them with great care. In the end, [Korea] yielded, treating our envoy cordially and also appointing a return envoy to come to Japan and apologize.… However, when the Ming had not yet repaired friendly relations with us, Hideyoshi, in a return letter given to the Joseon king, wrote that, supposing that the Ming do not want to repair relations with us, Japan must pass through Korea and in great numbers enter that country. As for Joseon, they should lead out of necessity. Because of this, the king was greatly afraid and secretly raised an army, which resulted in prompting the peninsular expeditions of our Bunroku (1592-6) and Keichō (1596-1615) eras.[3]

As we can see, Kemuyama uses much more restrained language than Itō. If we recall from the previous chapter, Itō had a tendency to use stronger, more inflammatory language when speaking of China, referring to them derisively, implying misconduct for failing to thank Hideyoshi for suppressing piracy, and the like, and further he heaped praise on Hideyoshi, using worshipful language to describe him. In contrast, in the above paragraph we see a dispassionate recitation of the events, without strong, emotionally charged language. That said, we still see a narrative that departs from contemporary narratives at key points in such as to place blame on the Ming, soften Japanese-Korean relations, and mischaracterize Hideyoshi's stated intentions.

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[3] Kemuyama, 91-2.

Regarding the construction of the narrative, Kemuyama, as with Itō, absolves Japan and Korea of responsibility and leaves the fault of the war on the shoulders of the Ming. Consider first how he writes of Japan's involvement in the conflict. At the outset, he tells us, Hideyoshi simply desired to make new ties with foreign states and, especially, wanted friendship with the Ming dynasty in China; he was, however, rebuffed despite his supposedly benign intentions. Such a rebuff, we can imagine, would have been considered an insult to Japan; after all, the *seikanron*, the very subject of the book, was touched off by a similar rebuff from Korea.[4] Yet, there is no mention of perceived insult here; rather, the author simply tells us that Hideyoshi dispatched a second mission, whose members "persuaded with great care" (具に諭す). A response with force only became necessary when the Ming continued to refuse Hideyoshi's good offices – that is, Hideyoshi, in this narrative, appears to have shown restraint in not seeking to punish the Ming until after repeatedly being rejected. Through this narrative of events, the author tacitly puts responsibility for the war on the Ming, implying that, if they had only entered into friendly relations with him, no war would have happened. As we shall see later, however, this narrative of events runs counter to the prevailing narratives.

The narrative that the author presents here also notably absolves Korea of responsibility. Despite not obeying Hideyoshi's wishes at first, the he makes a point of noting that the second envoy was treated "cordially" (篤く), and that the Koreans sent a return envoy to apologize for the earlier rebuff, in effect settling whatever insult they may have given to Japan in the first place. The army that the Koreans raised against the Japanese, he further notes, was not because they had any explicit desire to fight Japan but rather because they were afraid of the large number of

[4] Ravina, 180.

Japanese troops passing through – that is, their resistance was an understandable response. In this way, both Japan and Korea are absolved of any wrongdoing.

Kemuyama's narrative, though more restrained than Itō's, also contains questionable elements, the first and most glaring of these being his implication that Hideyoshi desired to make ties with the Ming and that the war was a result of their refusal. However, as discussed in chapter 2 of this essay, there is ample evidence that Hideyoshi intended an invasion of the Ming years before he had even completed subjugating the provinces of Japan. Kitajima Manji, for example, cites a total of five separate documents in which Hideyoshi expresses his intention to invade. The first of these, the Itsuyanagi Document (一柳文書), dates to 1585, seven years before the beginning of the war; in it, Kitajima writes, Hideyoshi "states his intention of a conquest of the Ming to his trusted retainer (腹心) Officer Hitotsunagi Sueyasu." In the next document, a letter to the Jesuit priest Gaspar Coelho dated to 1586, Hideyoshi announces a plan to subjugate the Ming and Joseon Korea. Following this, Kitajima cites the House Mōri Document (毛利家文章) and the Kuroda Document (黒田文章); these reveal that, in 1587, Hideyoshi indicated to three separate prominent figures "that they should be prepared for crossing the sea to Joseon and invading the Ming." One more document, the Myōmanji Document (妙満寺文章), also dated to 1587, records several of Hideyoshi's announcements to his wife, Kita no Mandokoro (also known as O-ne), that, among other things, "I will command the Joseon king to enter Japan and visit the capital; if the king refuses to come, [I] will punish him next year; and as long as [I] still live, [I] will bring the country of Ming into my grasp."[5]

[5] Kitajima, 14-15.

If this evidence were insufficient, there is the direct text of the "return letter" Hideyoshi sent back to Joseon after the Korean envoy finally came to Japan, which Kemuyama refers to in the section quoted from his book above. To review, Kemuyama characterizes the contents of this letter as follows: "supposing that the Ming do not want to repair relations with us, Japan must pass through Korea and in great numbers enter Ming."[6] The actual contents of the letter though, contradict these very details that Kemuyama includes. Following Kitajima's translation into modern Japanese, the text reads as follows: "However, I (Hideyoshi) am not satisfied with [just the subjugation of Japan]. Despite the fact that Japan is separated from Ming by mountains and oceans, I am thinking I shall enter that great country, impose Japanese customs upon the 400-odd states of the Middle Country (China), and plant Japanese rule for eternity."[7] As this indicates, not only did Hideyoshi plan to invade Ming from the start, the way that Kemuyama characterizes the contents of the letter – namely, by adding the conditional phrase "supposing that the Ming do not want to repair relations," suggesting that the invasion was the result of the Ming failing to do this – contrasts with the actual contents. That is, in the actual letter, Hideyoshi states with no uncertainty that he intends to invade Ming, without providing any necessary condition. Given the above evidence, Kemuyama was either ignorant of this evidence or intentionally misrepresenting the historical record. In absence of an overt explanation on Kemuyama's part, the reason he misrepresented these facts remains unclear. Whatever the reason, the narrative as he presents it has the effect of minimizing Hideyoshi's, and by association Japan's, status as an aggressor, similar to what appears in Itō's *Hideyoshi in His Later Years*.

An interesting contrast to Kemuyama's treatment of Hideyoshi's relations with Joseon is his treatment of Hideyoshi's interactions with Ryūkyū. As noted above, the treatment of the

[6] Kemuyama, 92.
[7] Kitajima, 8.

origins of the war with Korea de-emphasizes either country's responsibility and also uses only positive or neutral language to describe Korea – Korea treated the Japanese envoy "cordially," they sent a return envoy for the purposes of giving an apology, and they only fought Japan because they were afraid of having Japanese troops march through their land. However, when we examine his treatment of Ryūkyū, we see overtly critical language appearing. Regarding Ryūkyū, he writes as follows:

> Due to [Ryūkyū s estrangement from Japan], no sooner than Hideyoshi had unified the country (天下), he appointed Kamei Korenori as Viceroy (守) of of the islands and had him plan an expedition, though in the end this was not carried out. In the Bunroku period (1592-6), while he was sending forth the force to invade Korea, he also commanded to Shimazu Yoshihisa to make Ryūkyū provide foodstuffs; not obeying, [Ryūkyū] sought help from the Ming. Though the Shimazu clan rebuked this rudeness, [Ryūkyū] did not listen. Regarding the Ryukyu's worship of strength, [the Shimazu clan], more than not waking [Ryūkyū] up from that stubbornness by means of force, in the end had no chance to smash this [worship]."[8]

Near the end of this quotation, Kemuyama uses critical language to refer to the island kingdom. For example, he describes Ryūkyū's refusal to provide foodstuffs as "rudeness" (無禮) and the subsequent refusal comply as "obstinacy" (頑迷). Further, Ryūkyū's decision to side with the Ming is attributed to "worship of the strong" (事大主義). According to Charles Armstrong, this term, though originating in the philosophy of Mencius as a pragmatic stance for small countries to survive next to larger ones, began to take on a pejorative meaning in 20th century Korea.[9] Though it is uncertain whether the term carried the same connotation in Japanese, given the preceding use of the terms "rudeness" and "obstinacy" in refusing to comply with Japan, Kemuyama's usage here does suggest a pejorative connotation. This contrasts significantly with the language he used to describe Korea, in which he explicitly uses language to portray that

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[8] Kemuyama, 73.
[9] Armstrong, 57.

country in a more positive light, further indicating that his language regarding Korea was intentional, not incidental.

Examining the context of Japan's relations with Korea and Ryukyu in 1907 (the year of publication), a possible explanation for this difference in attitudes becomes apparent. At that time, Ryūkyū had been under Japanese control since 1879, whereas Korea had only just become a protectorate in 1905, two years before. Though it may be too much to claim that his critical language regarding Ryūkyū's refusal to join Japan in the war has any tangible connection to the fact that Japan's control of Ryūkyū was assured at the time of writing whereas it was not with Korea, the coincidence is nonetheless noteworthy. A further possible explanation is that Kemuyama viewed Ryūkyū more as a rebellious Japanese island while on the other hand viewed Korea as a separate sovereign state, worthy of respect. It is difficult to say with certainty what motivated him to write in this way; suffice to say, the discrepancy in his attitudes between the two should be noted.

Kemuyama's *True Affairs of the Invade Korea Debate*, we can summarize as follows. First, Kemuyama does not at the outset of his work take an obviously biased stance. That said, he presents a narrative that directly contradicts evidence from relevant historical documents. Compared to Itō, although Kemuyama does provide a more spare and restrained account of the events, lacking in the overtly critical attitudes, he nonetheless shows similar biases in his lack of attention to Korea and his tendency to blame the Ming.

Chapter 5: Okuda Naoki

Compared to the other writers discussed here, very little information is available about Okuda Naoki. No references to him could be found by searching for his name in English, and searching in Japanese yielded nothing but the fact that he lived from 1875 to 1942 and that he wrote a few books, such as a photo collection of the Meiji emperor as well as a collection of essays predominantly about the Imjin War, which is the subject of this chapter. A search of his name in Korean, however, did yield one result – an essay about Japanese travel writers in Korea during the mid-1910s. The information contained in the abstract reveals that he was a reporter at the Seoul Daily newspaper (京城日報), but little more.[1] Despite the lack of information about him, this one detail is sets him apart from the other writers – he is the only one who actually lived in Korea. As we shall see, compared to Ito and Kemuyama, he portrays the events of the war in far greater detail, providing a narrative every bit as comprehensive as contemporary narratives and every bit as factual; however, his interpretation of these facts reveals a biased attitude toward Hideyoshi as he takes pains to portray him in a positive light.

Okuda's book, *Ancient Traces of Korea and Japan*, is a collection of essays, originally published individually in the *Seoul Daily*, that cover topics on Japanese-Korean relations throughout recorded history. The book itself is quite lengthy, totaling in well over five hundred pages, and contains forty essays in total. This chapter analyzes two of them: "The Failure of Japanese-Korean Negotiations" and "Hideyoshi's Scheme to Provoke Disorder." Of these two, the former is an account of the period of negotiations between Hideyoshi's administration and

[1] Sim.

the Joseon court in the years preceding the outbreak of the conflict and the latter argues that the distrust that arose between the Ming and Joseon was part of Hideyoshi over-arching war plan. Before considering these essays, however, an examination of the prefaces of the book provides a view into the author's position regarding the subject matter of the book.

The book contains two prefaces, the first by one Nagao Ōoka (presumably his senior at the *Seoul Daily*, though his relation to the company is not clear) and the second by Okuda himself; both reveal their attitudes towards the annexation of Korea and by proxy Korea itself. First, the language that both uses strongly implies that the annexation was both natural and correct, and they connect this idea to the relationship of the two countries across time. In Nagao's case, he gives an overview of Japanese-Korean relations from ancient times on, characterizing these relations as both close and friendly, writing, for example, that "there was hardly an emperor from Jimmu (660 BCE – 585)[2] to Jitō (686 – 697 CE) who didn't have some connection to Korea," and claiming that the two countries exchanged tribute missions starting in the reign of emperor Sujin, concluding that "is there not the sense that the three kingdoms [of Korea] in those times were affiliated as a single territory in Japanese history, and at the same time were of one dominion under the true authority of an empire?"[3] Though admitting that relations were not as strong in later years, he insists that the two countries still maintained close contact. Though he stops short of connecting this directly to the annexation, the implication is clear: there was a historical precedent for their current relationship.

Okuda himself goes into far less detail on the matter, but expresses a similar opinion, and one that exhibits a much more disdainful attitude toward Korea. He characterizes Korea's

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[2] These are dates for Jimmu's reign according to Japanese tradition, but given his semi-mythical status, they should not be taken as fact.
[3] Ōka, "Introduction," 2-3.

relationship with its neighbors as fickle, writing that they "relied on the Ming in the morning and sent tribute to us (Japan) in the evening."[4] He then asks rhetorically, "Is it therefore not unusual that the fate of the peninsula to be situated under the Suzerain Authority of the Japanese empire?"[5] In this way he blames Korea for its current predicament, suggesting inferiority as the cause. Most interestingly, he uses the term "suzerain authority" (宗主權) to describe the Japan's relationship with Korea. This is the word that typically described the tributary relationship between Korea and China that existed through much of history. Choosing this term rather than using the word "annex" (併合) has symbolic resonance. In the first place, it implies that Japan had supplanted China in the East Asian world order, and in the second it implies that in this relationship between the two, Japan is the superior. This contrasts with the legal term used to describe the annexation, which merely indicates the fact that the two countries became one without directly implying superiority of one party to the other.[6]

These positive attitudes towards the annexation should be forefront in one's mind when considering their attitudes towards Hideyoshi's invasions he too sought to subjugate Korea to Japan. Looking to their words, they do not explicitly endorse Hideyoshi's project, but they do express positive views of Hideyoshi and they do not condemn his actions. Nagao, for example, refers to Hideyoshi's invasion as a brilliant achievement (快挙),[7] and Okuda himself expresses a positive attitude toward Hideyoshi, making an effort to interpret him as a wily and cunning leader.

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[4] Okuda, "Author's Preface," 1.
[5] Ibid., 1.
[6] Although it is true that the English word "annexation" does indicate one country as superior, the Japanese *heigō* (併合) has a meaning closer to the English "merger."
[7] Okuda, "Author's Preface," 3.

Unlike Itō Gingetsu or Kemuyama Sentarō, Okuda at least has a proclivity to represent historical fact as they are represented in historical documents. To give one example, recall that both of those writers suggested that Hideyoshi's invasion occurred because of a slight from the Ming, in the former case a failure to give praise and in the latter a refusal to make political ties (see chapters 3 and 4). Okuda, in contrast, cites only events that are verified in contemporary scholarship and makes ample use of direct quotations, citing official letters between Hideyoshi and the Joseon court, as well as Korean documents such as the *Book of Corrections* and others that detail the controversies resulting from the Japanese envoys at this time. He also includes many details that reflect poorly on Japan, details that none of the other sources discussed in this essay mention, such as envoy Yasuhiro's arrogant and rude behavior as well as envoy Sō Yoshitoshi's and also Hideyoshi's lack of decorum when meeting with Joseon officials. Of all the sources, then, we can say that this is the most factually accurate and complete narrative of the negotiations with Joseon at the outset of the war.

That said, Okuda's biases come out not through his narration of the events, but through his interpretation of them – that is to say, he accurately portrays what we are mostly certain happened given the sources, but these sources leave gaps that the historian must fill in order to form a complete narrative. The art of history writing, one could say, is appropriately considering the range of possibilities that might fill these gaps. In this respect, Okuda fails – his interpretation of events rarely admits to alternative possibilities, but rather states his suppositions without acknowledging the possibility of others. An good example of this arises from his view of Hideyoshi, whose actions he consistently interprets in order to portray him cunning and brilliant strategist, an image which we see created in two separate points.

In the first point, there is Okuda's portrayal of Hideyoshi's motivations for the war. For context, in the literature of Imjin War history, the list of possible motivations for the invasion is quite long, ranging from the purely militaristic – desiring glory – to more practical concerns like preventing internal turmoil or acquiring continental resources. As Swope's overview indicates,[8] a wide variety of ideas had already been posited by the time that Okuda was writing, yet of all the possibilities, he chooses the one that most strongly indicates Hideyoshi's strategic prowess: that Hideyoshi was attempting to prevent internal dissent. He writes:

> "With the ferocious generals and brave warriors having gathered as one at his knee, would all under Heaven at last come to peace? The Merciful Eye [of Buddha] upon him, he had already discerned the state of the realm. Fearing more internal disorder if the various generals were to grumble in their idleness having so quickly put away sword and lance, in his heart he was secretly anxious. It is for this reason perhaps that he had to have a clever scheme."[9]

Okuda does make mention of a few other related factors. He cites practical concerns for choosing Korea, for example, noting its proximity to Japan, being not a day from Tsushima, and Tsushima's close relationship to the Joseon court. In addition, he notes the death of Hideyoshi's beloved child – as did Itō – as well as the death of his half-brother Toyotomi Hidenaga, but only suggests that these bereavements led him to advance the date of the invasion.[10] The central reason, then, is only that Hideyoshi was smart enough to plan a head to prevent internal unrest, the interpretation of events that makes him appear the most cunning.

Okuda's presentation of Hideyoshi as a cunning strategist is his analysis of the distrust that developed between Ming and Joseon prior to the war. Contemporary scholarship agrees with the facts of the matter as Okuda presents them – Hideyoshi sent out calls for support to various

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[8] Kenneth M. Swope's volume *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail* gives a detailed overview of these explanations, 63-67.
[9] Okuda, "The Failure of Japanese-Korean Negotiations," 1.
[10] Ibid, 2.

neighboring countries, including Ryūkyū and the Portuguese outpost on the island of Luzon in the Philippines. Ryūkyū, then in a tributary relationship with China, sent a letter of warning to the Ming court, and a second warning arrived from another source; however, as the Ming received no notice from Joseon, they began to suspect collusion with the Japanese.[11] Unlike other scholarship, however, Okuda suggests that Hideyoshi intended to sow distrust from the start. He writes the following:

> "If Hideyoshi were to first send out an army, he had to detect how strong the Ming military was. In other words, because the army to invade Korea and attack the Ming had to first destroy the Korean army on the peninsula and right after cross the wide Yalu River to enter Ming, he required a policy that would enable him to oppose two countries. Supposing that the Ming court sent their great defensive army directly to Joseon, Hideyoshi's small army would have to confront it. Although the prospects of victory were clear from the start, Hideyoshi feared sustaining great damage to his troops. Therefore, along with sending out his armies, he had to have a policy to make Ming doubt Joseon and as much as possible delay the dispatch of their army."[12]

Following this, he describes the process by which this doubt developed, as outlined at the beginning of this paragraph.

Okuda's description of the situation is in itself accurate – we can be fairly certain that Hideyoshi knew of the close relationship between Joseon and China, that he knew that fighting both at the same time would be difficult, and that a policy to avoid fighting them both at the same time would improve his chances of victory. However, his claim that Hideyoshi intended to sow doubt between them is a leap of thought that goes beyond the available evidence. No contemporary scholarship cited in this essay makes any argument to this point, and Okuda himself fails to cite any documents that support his claim, indicating that he has done nothing more than make a supposition. According to accounts, what led the Ming to become suspicious

[11] See Okuda, 25-28 and Hawley, 93 for their respective accounts.
[12] Okuda, 25.

of Joseon is the fact that they received word of Hideyoshi's coming invasion from two separate sources while hearing nothing from Joseon. How could Hideyoshi possibly have known that Joseon would hesitate in this way? The entire strategy hinges on this single chance. If indeed this was Hideyoshi's plan, he is lucky that it worked at all. Regardless, given the flimsy evidence for this hypothesis and the certainty with which Okuda presents it, this is just one more reason to show that he went out of his way to portray Hideyoshi as a cunning strategist.

As we have seen, Okuda consistently shows keen attention to detail and factual accuracy in his narrative, giving all the details regardless of how they reflect on Japan or the other parties. In addition, he tends to write without judgment against the parties involved, though he does often interpret Hideyoshi's actions in the most positive light possible. This attempt to portray Hideyoshi positively also appears in Itō's writings. Kemuyama, in contrast, does not overtly praise Hideyoshi, as we saw, but neither did he criticize him. This lack of criticism, then, is a common characteristic shared by each of the writers examined so far, and one which is further reflected in the works of Hayashi Taisuke, considered below.

Chapter 6: Hayashi Taisuke

Hayashi Taisuke, like Kemuyama, was a formally trained academic, but in contrast he made history the primary focus of his career. Born in 1854 in Shimosa (modern Chiba), he was the oldest of other authors discussed here. As a youth he received a traditional Confucian education, but later graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1886 with a degree in the Classics and eventually became employed as a teacher at the Tokyo Higher Normal School (東京高等師範学校). Today he is known best for his work as a historian of Korea and China.[1] Regarding his work on Korea, from 1891 to 1912 he published a series of three histories of Korea, each one building on and expanding the work of the previous and culminating in *An Historical Overview of Chōsen* [Joseon] (1912). The chapter concerning the Imjin War, considered here, originally appeared in his book *Early Modern Korean History* (1901) and was reprinted unchanged in *Overview*.

To gauge Hayashi's attitude towards this topic, a consideration of his introduction to both of these books is in order; these two introductions, one written before the annexation of Korea and the other after, each reflect this change of circumstance, but in both cases his stated intent is didactic. He frames his first book, which was published in 1901, in a spare, academic fashion, providing nothing more than his credentials and defining his terms, such as distinguishing Joseon from the other kingdoms that had existed on the peninsula.[2] His second book, published soon after the Japanese annexation of Korea, takes on an even more explicit didactic angle: he

[1] Kabe and Nakamura, 303.
[2] Hayashi, *Early Modern Korean History*, 1-4.

suggests that since the two countries have become one, it is important for the Japanese people to know Korea's history. He further notes the peninsula's geopolitical importance, saying that its location at "the throat of the orient" makes it an important place for the major powers of the world, including Japan.[3] We should also note that, like Kemuyama, his preface does not include anything that obviously indicates bias on his part – as far as his words here reveal, he does not appear to want anything more than to tell the history of Korea for the benefit of the people of Japan.

Unlike Kemuyama, however, this indication bears out in his narrative of the war as well: he presents the most objective narrative of all considered here, one that is entirely consistent with contemporary scholarship, expressing no judgment or misinformation while dispassionately narrating the events of the war. For contrast, recall the language of Itō, Kemuyama, and Okuda, who each to greater or lesser extents either misrepresented the narrative of the war or actively worked to excuse Japan for the war. Hayashi, in contrast, narrates the events and rarely inserts his own opinions, or even uses adjectives or adverbs that indicate judgment. For example, recalling Kemuyama's descriptions of Ryūkyū, he suggests that the island kingdom was "obstinate" and "rude" to Japan; Hayashi eschews this kind of language. When he does insert his opinions, he does so in a way that is consistent with the evidence. To illustrate, when discussing Hideyoshi's plans for the invasion, he states that the warlord held these plans for a long time but was only certain of attempting it once he had achieved hegemony on the islands.[4] Though the available documents do not contain an exact statement that indicates this, considering the fact that Hideyoshi did not begin the invasion until after this was completed does make Hayashi's

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[3] Hayashi, *Historical Overview*, 1-4.
[4] Ibid., 317-8.

supposition here reasonable, certainly much more so than the kinds of conjectures that Itō, Kemuyama, or Okuda make.

The only point of his narrative that requires scrutiny is the omission of details that could conceivably be embarrassing for Japan. For example, envoy Tachibana Yasuhiro's insults to the Koreans and other bad behavior, Sō Yoshitoshi's arrogant conduct on Tsushima, or the long length of time that Hideyoshi kept the Joseon envoy waiting for him in Kyoto both before and after he granted them an audience, and he also does not discuss in detail the contents of Hideyoshi's letters, which the Joseon officials interpreted as insolent and rude. Hayashi does, however, state clearly in the first paragraph of the chapter that "since this is an event connected to our Japan, extant sources are not few, and since comparatively many have appeared in our society, the facts connected with Japan will as much as possible be abbreviated and I will chiefly speak of the conditions internal to Joseon."[5] In this way, Hayashi offers a plausible explanation as to why he does not discuss these details. Whether he had an ulterior motive in leaving out these details and used the above as an excuse cannot be confirmed, but given the overall quality of his work, it is likely that this is not the case.

Beyond the above point, there is little more to analyze in Hayashi's narrative – that is to say, further analysis would yield little more than confirmation of his claims in other scholarship or in historical documents, a process which would be tedious and uninteresting for the reader. However, this quality of his work is precisely what makes it so interesting in the context of the other narratives of the Imjin War that were written at this time. As shown above, each of the writers in their own ways expresses numerous identifiable biases in their narratives that in one way or another shift focus away from Hideyoshi as an aggressor. Hayashi, in contrast, does no

[5] Ibid., 317.

such thing. Though he may have excluded details that could be perceived as embarrassing to Japan, his factual narrative of events, devoid of judgment or criticism for the parties involved, makes his work an important subject for future study. Does the rest of his narrative of this war, and his narratives of other events in Korean history measure up to the part that has been examined here? Does he consistently maintain this quality of work over the course of his career? If so, then this would make him a scholar worthy of note, who showed the ability to maintain a greater degree of objectivity that many others writing about Korea in this politically charged climate.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

The four authors that considered here – Itō Gingetsu, Kemuyama Sentarō, Okuda Naoki, and Hayashi Taisuke – are a diverse group. In education, we have the lesser educated such as Itō, the university educated Hayashi and Kemuyama, and with Hayashi even possessing a more traditional Confucian education in addition to a Western university education. Some were professional academics like Kemuyama and Hayashi; others were reporters and commentators like Itō and Okuda. Three lived and wrote while living in Japan; Okuda, notably, spent an extensive period of time living in Korea. Their writings on the Imjin War are also diverse. Some wrote extensively on Korea, such as Okuda and Hayashi; others – Itō and Kemuyama – only wrote about Korea and the war incidentally. Some wrote biographies, some wrote topical histories, and still others wrote general histories. Through this diversity, however, we see a number of commonalities that arise, which give us a view into general characteristics of Imjin War narratives at the close of the Meiji period.

The first common characteristic an absence of any critical judgment of Japan or Hideyoshi, though this tendency is expressed differently from one author to the next. One way this was done was by suggesting that the invasion was a natural response to the circumstances, as appeared in Itō's *Hideyoshi in His Later Years*, where he argued that the invasion was the result of the "principle of Japanese nation building," suggesting that the natural course for Japan was to expand outward when there is surplus power in the country. A weaker version of such a naturalistic argument also appears in Okuda's writings, though the main thrust of his narrative emphasized and even praises Hideyoshi's agency. He writes, "perhaps we should say it was duly

natural for he who brimmed with advantages [to possess the ambition to invade Korea and attack the Ming]."[1] A second way that these authors avoided judging Japan was by either explicitly or implicitly blaming China, as we saw in Itō's *Japan, Country of the Sea* and Kemuyama's *True Affairs of the Invade Korea Debate*. Regarding Itō, recall that in both *A History of Japanese Piracy* and *Hideyoshi in His Later Years*, where he suggests spuriously that Hideyoshi sought to invade Ming because they failed to praise him for putting an end to pirate raids on the coasts. In Kemuyama's account, he emphasizes that Hideyoshi wanted to repair relations with the Ming and invaded because they refused to comply, which as we recall is not accurate. In the case of Hayashi, he simply did not make any comment, either implicit or explicit, that indicated judgment of Hideyoshi or the war.

That these writings do not express criticism of Hideyoshi's foreign invasions – at least insofar as he did engage in foreign invasions at all – it not surprising given the two successful foreign wars that had occurred in the two decades prior to these writings. Given these successes, a criticism of Hideyoshi's invasions, at least insofar as criticizing them as foreign invasions, would be an implicit criticism of those recent wars, although certainly a writer who was critical of those wars, would likely criticize Hideyoshi. For this reason, one can at least tentatively conclude that these authors did not look unfavorably towards the Sino- and Russo-Japanese wars. A point worth investigating would be whether the attitudes that these authors expressed might have been influenced by the Meiji era wars, or whether such positive or neutral attitudes began to appear prior to them. Given some general comments made by other Japanese scholars concerning writings of Hideyoshi and the Imjin War from the Edo period, a case could be made both for continuity and for change, or we could even say that there was a mixture of both.

[1] Okuda, "The Failure of Japanese-Korean Negotiations," 2.

Regarding popular Edo period attitudes toward Hideyoshi, Kuwata Tadachika, in his study of writings of Hideyoshi, indicates that they were in fact predominately positive. Noting the extent of falsehoods contained in these Taiko legends (太閤伝記) and Taiko stories (太閤物語), he writes that "there are hardly any falsehoods that damage Hideyoshi's reputation.".[2] This indicates a popular view of Hideyoshi as hero of sorts, and indeed the most positive views of Hideyoshi and the invasions are to be found among our popular writers, Okuda and Itō. Viewed from a popular perspective, then, it does appear based on this limited evidence that these attitudes represent continuity from earlier writings. However, in the case of intellectual writers, there appears to be shift in attitudes, though this can only be characterized as a shift from critical to neutral. As discussed above, the two academic writers, Hayashi and Kemuyama, are neutral in their opinions – or, better to say, they do not offer any explicit opinion. Ōmori Kingorō, however, writing of Edo period intellectual discourses on the Imjin War, writes that, "as a rule [intellectuls] did not have sympathy for Hideyoshi. On the whole, although there were those who praised Hideyoshi, there was no praise for his foreign invasions.[3] He then goes on to cite several examples of those who explicitly judged those invasions to be improper or immoral. The neutral stance that our two intellectuals take, then, may represent a shift from critical to neutral. A further recommendation for future research, then, would be to examine any intellectual narratives written in the early Meiji period to see if Edo period attitudes persisted or if they began to change before the Meiji period foreign wars; in addition, analysis of subsequent narratives would also help confirm whether or not the attitudes of Hayashi and Kemuyama are anomalous.

A second common characteristic is that, though some shifted blame for the war to Ming China, none of them attempted to do the same with Korea. In the case of Hayashi and Okuda,

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[2] Kuwata, 11.
[3] Ōmori, 250.

neither one makes arguments regarding blame for the war at all, and Okuda even makes a point of mentioning that the Japanese envoys to Korea were treated cordially and he is not shy about mentioning ways in which the Japanese envoys and even Hideyoshi himself behaved improperly, facts that, if he had wanted to blame the Koreans, he would certainly have de-emphasized. Interestingly, though, Kemuyama and Itō go even further, almost completely effacing Korea from their discussions altogether. In Itō's case, he hardly mentions Korea, focusing most of his attention on the relationship between Japan and the Ming. Kemuyama also puts his emphasis on the Ming, but acknowledges Korea only enough to excuse their refusal to allow Hideyoshi to borrow the roads to Ming, saying that they were afraid. This last point does reveal that at least there was a case to be made for shifting blame to the Koreans: one could easily imagine that one who wanted to impugn Korea in this way could plausibly make the case that they were at fault for not letting Hideyoshi used the roads, yet none do so. Therefore, despite there being the opportunity to blame Korea, none do so.

The fact that these authors avoided writing critically about Korea draws a contrast with other writings about Korea that were published around the same time: following the Russo-Japanese War, when Korea became a protectorate of Japan, many began writing about the Koreans and often this writings took on an explicitly critical viewpoint. Of these, Todd Henry's discussion of Japanese ethnographies of Korea is a good example: in his discussion, he examines several examples of Koreans being portrayed as almost subhuman, imbecilic, and filthy.[4] Our writers, however, do not take explicitly critical views of Korea or Koreans in general. Though indeed those such as Itō and Kemuyama hardly mention Korea at all, Hayashi and Okuda, who do, also eschew such critical views. Okuda himself is particularly positive in his

[4] Henry, 643-654.

characterizations of Koreans interactions with Japan, repeatedly emphasizing the politeness and care with which the Joseon officials dealt with their Japanese counterparts and quite openly acknowledges the general lack of decorum on the Japanese side, though he does at times excuse it. All in all, then, their attitudes towards Korea contrast sharply with these ethnographers. Although off the topic for this line of research, an expanded search to locate other enclaves of Japanese writings on Korea that express similar neutrality or even positivity might be useful to paint a more nuanced picture of Japanese colonial discourse than what currently exists.

The usefulness of this recommendation is evident from the fact that much of the research on colonial Japanese discourses has up until now focused either entirely or in part on examining the nature of the biases in Japanese writers of the colonial period. To list some examples, there is Henry's study cited earlier, and also such works as Robert Tierney's *Tropics of Savagery*, Stefan Tanaka's *Japan's Orient*, and Ruth Rogaski's *Hygienic Modernity*, each of which in their own way explore prejudicial attitudes that various elements of Japanese society held towards their colonial subjects. While doubtless these works of scholarship are valuable, thought-provoking, and illuminating, they do not address writers such as Hayashi who, at least in the portion of his writings considered here, do not so obviously express these prejudices. By focusing on these elements of the Japanese imperial ideology to the exclusion of other voices, the resulting picture of imperial Japan may be skewed. A broad study of writings from the Meiji period until the end of World War II with the goal of assessing the prevalence of writers of writers who attained a greater degree of objectivity in their work would do much to either correct or confirm the impression that current scholarship creates.

Finally, these four authors' attitudes towards China, which range from neutral to critical, occupy a complicated and evolutionary space in popular Japanese attitudes, one that ranges from

laudatory, to critical, to altogether unacknowledged. Urs Matthias Zachman, for example, identifies two main trends in Japanese public opinion of China that persisted through the Edo period: a political trend in which China was "studiously ignored" and a cultural trend in which China maintained high status,[5] though this cultural trend is further complicated with the Nativist (国学) school of thought that saw Chinese influence on Japan as pernicious and corrosive to Japanese essence. None of these trends, however, appear obviously in these narratives of the Imjin War. As we have seen, China features importantly in all of these writings, suggesting that it was certainly not ignored, and yet as we have seen, none of these writers explicitly praise China either. Though Itō and Kemuyama do criticize, they do not do so from a Nativist perspective, which would emphasize China's negative influence on Japan, but rather scapegoat the Ming. Even Okuda and Hayashi, who present the most neutral attitudes, neither ignore, nor praise, nor malign. These attitudes, then, represent a new direction in popular attitudes towards China.

The range of attitudes expressed in these works does reflect the complex nature of late-Meiji views of China. Returning to Zachman's study, we find popular discourses replete with examples of a wide variety of attitudes, from openly antagonistic to friendly and everything in between, though he his narrative suggests several peaks of hostile intensity (the mid-1880s and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5), interspersed with periods of relative tranquility.[6] The most fundamental change, he argues, occurred in the political discourse following the Sino-Japanese

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[5] Zachman, 8.
[6] Ibid., 22.

War (1904-5) that followed the reversal of power relations between the two countries.[7] He writes as follows:

> The Sino-Japanese War did not have the effect of turning respect into contempt and undermining 'a millennium of harmonious Sino-Japanese relations.' […] Moreover, these events paradoxically did not encourage the Japanese public to continue its prewar harangue against China as the 'common enemy' of civilization, but led to a rapprochement between China and Japan which, in the Japanese public view, was rationalized as the revival of Sino-Japanese friendship.[8]

Our writers, however, at times match the trend as he describes it and at other times defy it. The most explicit defiance is Itō's narrative, which contains the harshest language directed towards China of any considered here. The other writers, however, do reflect this trend: Okuda and Hayashi do not present negative views, and Kemuyama, though implying that the Ming prompted the war, nonetheless does not use harsh or judgmental language when describing this. In this case, then, this sample of Imjin War narratives does support Zachman's distillation of the period, though Itō is a notable outlier, evidence of the variety of attitudes present at this time.

These author's attitudes and their narratives of the Imjin War, as discussed above, show the influence of the Meiji period socio-political situation. Despite writing about regimes that ceased to exist centuries before, with possibly the exception of Hayashi, each of them expresses some form of prejudice that can be traced to Japan's position with respect to its neighbors, from the tendency to either praise Hideyoshi or at least exonerate him, to the tendency to shift blame to China and to either minimize or exonerate Korea as an actor in the conflict. These narratives, though comprising of just a small part of the overall zeitgeist of this period, nonetheless add to our understanding of the complexities of popular attitudes, revealing details about how the

[7] Ibid., 153.
[8] Zachman, 156.

people of Japan viewed themselves, how they viewed their past, and even to some extent how they viewed their future.

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