

REVIEW: *JAPANESE-MONGOLIAN RELATIONS*

Reviewed by Anja Reid (Murdoch University)



James Boyd. 2011. *Japanese-Mongolian Relations, 1873-1945: Faith, Race and Strategy*. Kent: Global Oriental. xv+264pp, conventions, abbreviations, timeline, maps and illustrations, notes on the text, appendices, bibliography, index. ISBN 9781906876197 (hardcover 100USD/77€).

Japanese individuals were among the many foreigners with interests in Mongolia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With the Soviet Union to the north and the Republic of China to the south, Japanese political, military, scholarly, business, and Buddhist elites were among those attentive to the region's strategic position. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholars of Japan, as well as Japanese scholars, have widely contributed to dispelling myths of Mongolia's isolation, as well as to unraveling the complex geopolitical relationships between Manchuria, Russia, Mongolia, China, and Japan.

Focusing on the period 1873 to 1945, and dealing with a range of topics beyond strategic political and military concerns, Boyd's seminal work explores the implications of Japanese understandings of the cultural relationships between Japan and Inner Mongolia, the so-called buffer zone between 'Outer' Mongolia and the Republic of China. Limiting his focus to Japanese perspectives during that period has permitted a comprehensive evaluation of the intricate interdependencies of Japan's non-military and military activities. Original research from Japanese archives adds fascinating and important insights, while maps and illustrations add visual depth to a well-articulated narrative.

The introduction alerts readers to the fluidity of Japanese interpretations of what constituted 'Mongolia' across a variety of spheres of Japanese influence. The imprecisely defined label of 'Man-Mō' – Manchuria-Mongolia – ultimately linked Manchuria with 'Inner' rather than 'Outer' Mongolia in ambiguous ways that varied with time and between writers.

The first chapter, aptly titled 'Soldiers, Adventurers, and Educators,' covers the period 1873 to 1912. It emphasizes the romanticized images of three pioneering figures of the Japanese encounter with Mongolia – the soldier, the adventurer, and the educator – to demonstrate the intertwining Japanese imperialist, political, and cultural interests. The 'soldier,' prominent military figure Fukushima Yasumasa, with close ties to Mongolia, wrote forewords to two books on Mongolia published in Japan between 1909 and 1913. The 'adventurer,' Kawashima Naniwa, was a political activist involved in covert operations in China supporting Japanese attempts to bring about an 'independent' Mongolia. The 'educator' is the 'forgotten hero,' Kawahara Misako, the headmistress of the first girls' school in Inner Mongolia. The networks established between these individuals and organizations on the fringes of Japanese imperialist, political, and cultural interests remained active until 1945.

The vacillating Japanese ideas of 'faith' and 'race' in the title are explicated in chapters two to five, in Boyd's descriptions of the complexities of Japanese socio-cultural involvement in Inner Mongolia. He pays most attention to Japanese academic interpretations of the encounters of mainstream and fringe Buddhists with the Mongols. Focusing on the period 1933-1945, chapter five in particular emphasizes the general link that flows throughout the book regarding the positive Japanese outlook toward the Mongols and Japan's 'civilizing' cultural diplomacies. These were to be achieved through the semi-official humanitarian organization Zenrin kyōkai 'Good Neighbor Association'. Boyd's in-depth exposition makes clear that the Association's publication of books and journals on Mongolia and the Mongols, the establishment of its own school in Tokyo, a

training facility in Inner Mongolia, and schools for Muslims, were all part of a complex Japanese imperialist project in the region.

The project was underpinned by two important sub-texts of Japan's romanticized benevolence toward the Mongols and the Mongolian region. The tradition of *gekokujō*, 'overthrow of the senior by the junior', involved a process of "patriotic insubordination" (7) according to the conflicting necessities of force or persuasion to suit specific circumstances of the Japanese cause. To a lesser degree, the Japanese ideal of *gozoku kyōwa*, 'harmony of the five races', was utilized to distinguish between ethnic groups of Manchuria and Mongolia in order to achieve cooperation. Boyd is thus able to conclude that Mongolia was "unique among Japan's imperial relationships" (222).

The strength of Boyd's work is the detailed attention given to a wide range of Japanese figures involved in Inner Mongolian affairs, supporting his assertion that, "Mongolia was far more important to Japan than has been previously recognized" (222). Additionally, he introduces the value of the Mongolian horse to Japanese imperial strategies in a vast, largely inhabited region, although this does not directly appear in his index. The book is of obvious value to Mongolists interested in Japanese links, as well as specialists intrigued by affairs, both formal and informal, of the Asian mainland with Inner Asia.