

# WAR AND MILITARISM IN MODERN JAPAN

ISSUES OF HISTORY AND IDENTITY

Edited by

GUY PODOLER

*University of Haifa*



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ORIENTAL

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# Contents

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<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Notes on Transliteration</i>	<i>xiv</i>
Introduction	1
GUY PODOLER	
<b>PART I: HISTORY</b>	
1 Japan's Tug of War After the Russo-Japanese War	9
IAN NISH	
2 Facing a Dilemma: Japan's Jewish Policy in the Late 1930s	22
NAOKI MARUYAMA	
3 Ethnicity and Gender in the Wartime Japanese Revue Theatre	39
JENNIFER ROBERTSON	
4 'The Terrible Weapon of the Gravely Injured' – Mishima Yukio's Literature and the War	53
IRMELA HIJIYA-KIRSCHNEREIT	
5 Reenacting a Failed Revolution: The February 26 Incident in Theatre and Film, 1960-1980	63
DAVID G. GOODMAN	
<b>PART II: IDENTITY IN HISTORY</b>	
6 Imperial Japan and Its POWs: The Dilemma of Humaneness and National Identity	80
ROTEM KOWNER	

# Ethnicity and Gender in the Wartime Japanese Revue Theatre

JENNIFER ROBERTSON

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The 'playing' of ethnography is a genuinely interdisciplinary enterprise, for if we are to satisfy ourselves of the reliability of our script and our performance of it, we will need advice from various nonanthropological sources . . . Ideally we need to consult, better still, bring in as part of the cast, members of the culture being enacted (Turner 1982: 90).

## INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL WEAPON

This epigraphic quote from the late 'performance anthropologist' Victor Turner could have been written by his Japanese counterpart active in the 1930s and 1940s. At that time, Japanese theatre directors and critics dramatized ethnography for the dual purposes of wartime recreation and the cultural assimilation of Japanese colonial subjects. They sought to create a 'cultural weapon' by fusing theatre and ethnography. It was an ambitious – and in retrospect, chilling – plan for which they sought advice from various anthropological sources, including from the very peoples who themselves were targeted for assimilation. One theatre critic, Endō Shingo, writing in 1943 about Japanese theatrical productions about and for export to the 'southern regions' (*nanpō*), urged playwrights and directors to closely collaborate with anthropologists in order to create plausible representations of, and for, Asian and Pacific peoples (Endō 1943: 1). I shall explore the affective, aesthetic and cultural dimensions of Japanese colonialism that have previously been neglected relative to the more bureaucratic, military and political dimensions of that expansionist project. Specifically, drawing on several of my earlier publications, I shall examine the relationship, primarily during the 1930s and 1940s, between colonial anthropology and the revue theatre in Japan, focusing in particular on the representation on

stage of the various peoples and cultures subjected to Japanese domination. The theatre discussed here is the all-female Takarazuka Revue, founded in 1913 (see Robertson 2001 [1998]). The Revue's opportunistic founder (a leading entrepreneur and politician), playwrights and directors collaborated with the military state to create a popular drama with the didactic potential to shape public impressions about the peoples and cultures under Japanese rule.

Beginning with the colonization of Okinawa in 1874, followed by that of Taiwan in 1895, Korea in 1910, Micronesia in 1919, Manchuria in 1931, North China by 1937 and much of South-east Asia by 1942, the state consolidated through brutal military force a vast Asian-Pacific domain, the so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*daitōa kyōeiken*), a rubric coined in August 1940.<sup>1</sup> The core literature on Japanese empire-building details four of the means through which the Japanization of Asia was pursued: the education of children, the exaltation of state Shintō, the organization of youth, and observation tours to Japan (Peattie 1988: 104). To these I would add an overarching fifth means, entertainment, which, like the preceding four, was also deployed within Japan as a means of incorporating the public into the imperialist project and ethos. An abundance of archival evidence suggests that theatre was regarded by the state and its agents as a particularly efficacious form of entertainment towards this end both within and outside of Japan.<sup>2</sup>

Takarazuka playwrights were especially keen on incorporating ethnographic details into wartime revues for the purpose of providing the public with 'culturally authentic', spectacular 'infotainment' (information plus entertainment). Although the relationship between the Takarazuka Revue, a private corporation, and the imperial state was one of mutual opportunism as opposed to seamless consensus, the 'cross-ethnicking' performed by the cross-dressed actors was homologous to the official rhetoric of assimilation which equated Japanese expansion with a mission to 'civilize' through Japanization the peoples of Asia and the South Seas (see Robertson 2001 [1998], ch. 3; cf. de Grazia 1981). The 'civilizing mission' of the ethnographically informed revues was two-fold. On the one hand, colonial subjects were represented on stage as objects and products of the dominant Japanese imagination of exotic yet inferior alterity. On the other hand, these representations were sometimes recirculated in performances staged abroad, as 'culturally correct' models to be emulated by the very peoples objectified on the Takarazuka stage. In this way, the theatre enacted a discourse of comparative otherness with the catalytic effect of enabling a broad spectrum of the Japanese viewing public to think that they were familiar with, knowledgeable about, and superior to manifold other cultures and ethnic groups.

European cultures and societies were also represented on the wartime Takarazuka stage. In the fall of 1941, for example, the Revue produced the play, *New Flag* (*Atarashiki hata*), which glamorized the unification of

Germany under the Third Reich. The play was described as the 'staged performance' (*butaika*) of the information on Germany available in newspapers and magazines (Hasegawa 1941: 14). A brief aside on the synergistic relationship between the print media and Takarazuka is relevant in this connection. The Revue was regularly featured in newspapers and magazines, and, during the wartime period in particular, was envisioned as a 'living newspaper' instrumental in mobilizing and indoctrinating people. The 'living newspaper' was a dramaturgical form in which current events were editorialized through dramatic metaphors and visual effects. I am using the term 'living newspaper' loosely with respect to the Takarazuka Revue in referring to the interwar practice of staging plays whose themes and subjects corresponded with those addressed in the print media.<sup>3</sup> The Revue's directors effectively harnessed the operatic power of these themes and subjects in an effort to both accommodate and extend the directives of the state.

#### STAGING COLONIALISM

Founded in 1913 by Kobayashi Ichizō, an influential businessman and Minister of Commerce and Industry between 1940 and 1941, the Takarazuka Revue was conceived in part as a novel inversion of the all-male Kabuki theatre. In 1919, Kobayashi established the Takarazuka Music Academy as part of the Revue complex and from which all actors had to graduate. The 3,000-seat Takarazuka Grand Theatre (*Daigekijō*) was completed in 1924, the largest Japanese theatre of its kind at the time—the original theatre was much smaller and quite rudimentary. The Grand Theatre, rebuilt after a fire in 1935, and again in the late 1980s, remains one component of an expansive 'wholesome entertainment' (*kenzen na goraku*) complex in Takarazuka, now a city near Osaka. In 1943, the complex included a hot springs spa, a library, a botanical garden, an entomology museum and a zoo noted for its white tiger. A theatre nearly as large was opened in Tokyo in 1935 and rebuilt in 2000.

Approximately 700 people presently enable Takarazuka to function, and the literature suggests that about the same number were employed during the wartime period: 400 performers and 300 specialists including producers, directors, writers, costumers, set designers, instructors and two thirty-five-piece orchestras. The actors are divided into five troupes, four of which were established between 1921 and 1933, while a fifth troupe was added in 1998. Dividing the women into troupes facilitated organizing the growing number of actors (from twenty at the outset, to about 350 in 1931 [Hashimoto 1984: 118-20]), and enabled year-round performances at different venues throughout Japan. Each troupe is overseen by a (male) member of the Revue administration. The internal hierarchy consists of a troupe manager and a vice-manager appointed from among the senior actors. The Revue's patriarchal management, strict vertical social organization, and emphasis on hierarchy determined by

age, sex and gender was confluent with the social agenda of the wartime state (see Robertson 2001 [1998], chapter 3).<sup>4</sup>

A conservative estimate of the total annual number of spectators at both the original Takarazuka and Tokyo Takarazuka theatres in the wartime period totals several million, a significant audience that, in the eyes of the state, could not be ignored. Partly to increase business and partly to work with the state in mobilizing the Japanese people, mobile troupes of actors from Takarazuka and other revues were dispatched, in the late 1930s, to factories, farm villages, hospitals, and even war fronts throughout China, Korea, Manchuria, South-east Asia and Micronesia to provide civilians and soldiers with 'wholesome entertainment' and to symbolically weave together the disparate parts of the Japanese Empire (Matsumoto 1939; Shasetsu: *engeki bunka to engekijō* 1942; Shōchiku Kagekidan 1978: 45-8; Takagi 1942; Toita 1956 [1950]: 250-2; Uemoto 1941). Revue administrators even briefly considered a plan of establishing an all-female revue in North China (Matsumoto 1939). A couple of years later the state pressured Takarazuka and other theatres into organizing the mobile troupes under the auspices of the Japanese Federation of Mobile Theatres (Nippon idō *engeki renmei*).

Since, as of 1934, the 1,934 drama theatres of widely varying sizes were concentrated in cities ('*Monbusho goraku chōsa*' 1932), regional tours by commercial theatre troupes were important components in the process of national mobilization. The intensive activities of the mobile groups of actors further popularized theatre among diverse audiences in Japan and abroad (Toita 1956 [1950]: 252) and helped to disseminate a military and imperialist ethos in the guise of entertainment. Although mobile theatre troupes have a centuries-old history in Japan, the specific use of such troupes during the Second World War was reinforced by the precedent set in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, where portable stages brought sanctioned entertainment to the masses.

In 1944, under the auspices of an emergency economizing measure, the state closed nineteen commercial theatres, including Takarazuka and levied a stiff tax on them; the mobile units continued to be deployed (Toita 1956 [1950]: 243-4). Six theatres, including Takarazuka, were reopened the following month for a maximum of two-and-a-half hours daily during which patriotic plays and films were scheduled (Hagiwara 1954: 150-1). Takarazuka revues were resumed in May 1945 at the Takarazuka Eigagekijō (movie theatre), the main theatre having been expropriated by the Navy as an educational facility for air corp trainees. The Tokyo branch, on the other hand, had been converted into a factory for the assembly of exploding balloons made from mulberry paper.<sup>5</sup>

From the outset, Takarazuka revues included Japanese-style 'classical' dramas and historical subjects, such as *The Tale of Genji*, Broadway-based and European-style performances, such as *Madama Butterfly* and *Mon Paris*, as well as folk dances from all over the world. With the exception of wartime revues, contemporary Japan and Japanese were not and are not represented and objectified on the Takarazuka stage. Generally

speaking, it was during the wartime years that 'plays dealing with the present (emergency) situation' (*jikyoku engeki*) were staged. In these dramas, time and space, history and geography were collapsed. The majority of revues produced during the late 1930s and early 1940s were about military and colonial policies and exigencies, such as the 'southward advance' (*nanshin*) (e.g. *Saipan-parao: Waga nan'yō* [Saipan-Palau: Our South Seas], 1940), immigration to Manchuria (e.g. *Shunran hiraku koro* [When Spring Orchids Bloom], 1941), patriotic school girls (e.g. *Gunkoku jogakusei* [Schoolgirls of a military nation,], 1938), and intrepid nurses (e.g. *Kaigun byōin* [Navy Hospital], 1940).

The Takarasiennes, as the Revue's actors are nicknamed, include *otokoyaku*, or men's role players, and *musumeyaku*, or women's role players. Like the Kabuki actors before them, the cross-dressed actors clinched the popular appeal of the Revue among a very broad, multi-generational, mixed-sex audience.<sup>6</sup> In addition to 'doing' a wide range of men and women, the Takarazuka actors also engage in 'cross-ethnicking', that is the embodiment and performance of non-Japanese characters of diverse national and ethnic backgrounds. Just as gender is constructed on the basis of contrastive physical and behavioural stereotypes about females and males, so too were ethnic characters in the wartime theatre based on reified images of 'us' and 'them'.

In this connection, it is useful to comment briefly about the specifically Japanese 'orientalism' which characterized both colonial policy and revues built around the theme of Japanese cultural superiority and military supremacy. Imperialist Japanese also engaged in orientalizing practices. Non-Japanese Asians and South Sea islanders were uniformly portrayed as inferior to the Japanese, although some were 'good' or dependent, and others 'bad' or resistant. I am using 'orientalism' in a broader sense than Edward Said's initial formulation, according to which 'the West' creates 'the East' as its diametrical opposite. I find orientalism most useful as a processual theory of oppositional, essentialized constructions of others that work to intensify a dominant cultural or national image. It does this by dramatizing the 'distance and difference between what is closer to it and what is far away' (Said 1979 [1978]: 55).<sup>7</sup> Orientalism in this generic sense has been deployed since the late nineteenth century by Japanese historians and ideologues in two apparently contradictory but actually mutually constitutive ways: to present *the Japanese* as culturally superior to other Asian peoples, and/or to claim an essential, mystifying uniqueness that distinguishes Japan from nation-states perceived as comparable in industrial and military power (i.e. 'the West') (cf. Tanaka 1993).<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, New Japan (*shin'nippon*), as the imperial nation-state was called, was an imagined community constructed from select artifacts of western material culture; a nation whose western inflections would, theoretically, allow it to withstand the encroachments of European and American powers (cf. Feuerwerker 1989). On the other hand, New Japan was also imagined to be both the repository for, and legacy of, the products of Asia's ancient

cultural histories, and thus bore the burden of salvaging Asia for the Asians.

The process of Japanese orientaling was expressed in a two-part article on the production and goals of wartime revues published in 1942 by a Takarazuka administrator in *Gendai Engeki* (Modern Theatre), an influential theatre arts journal:

The Japanese revue theatre is best described as a cultural engineering corps, and as such, has a role in teaching and guiding East Asian peoples. The Japanese revue must work towards purging from Asian cultures the bad influence of Euro-American revues which have all but eradicated local cultures with glorious histories spanning thousands of years. It is the responsibility of the Japanese to raise the standard of culture in East Asia; they [East Asians] are leaving that task to us. We must . . . pursue affirmative, spiritual ideals. The revue is a rich repository of cultural forms; [Asian] customs and manners must be incorporated into revues in order to capture the charm of ordinary people. The revue is a type of entertainment that can and will become deployed as war materiél (*gunjuhin*). (Komatsu 1942: 67)

The Takarazuka administrator provided an example of a hypothetical revue, *East Asian Bouquet* (*Tōa no hanataba*), inspired by the Greater East Asian theatre of war. *East Asian Bouquet* was to present various colonized Asian nationals and ethnic groups and their cultures to Japanese audiences. The ten geographically-based scenes constituting the hypothetical revue were titled, Japan, Manchuria, New China, French Indo-China, Thailand, Luzon, Burma, Malaya, Java (Bali) and a multi-ethnic finale (Komatsu 1942: 65).<sup>9</sup> The people involved in its production – lyricists, choreographers, costume designers, and so on – were to travel to the featured sites where they could study the local cultures in order to better recreate ‘authentic’ local settings for their Japanese audiences (Komatsu 1942: 65).

There is no record of *East Asian Bouquet* ever having been performed by either Takarazuka or another revue. The closest equivalent to this hypothetical revue was *Children of East Asia* (*Tōa no kodomotachi*, 1943), a drama ‘dedicated to the juveniles of East Asia, especially the sons of Nippon who shoulder the future destiny of the East’. The eighteen-scene revue was divided into three geographic parts: Manchoukou, with an emphasis on the founding of the puppet state in 1932; China, whose relationship with Japan is portrayed metaphorically as a father-son relationship; and the ‘Southern Area’, represented as a utopian garden whose feathered inhabitants happily chirp praises of Asian unity (Matsumoto 1943b).

*East Asian Bouquet* may have been a hypothetical revue, but it accurately describes the conception, dramaturgical organization, and production of wartime revues in general. The Revue’s staff in fact often travelled to the countries and colonies represented on stage to gather

first hand, culturally relative material and ideas for their productions (Komatsu 1942: 65; Miyatake 1942). Some wartime revues staged by the Revue were even written by army and navy playwrights who had access to unpublished ethnographic reports and military intelligence. In addition to incorporating ethnographic data into their plays, the Takarazuka staff also wrote ‘anthropological’ reports about the various cultural areas they visited. For example, the script anthology in which *New Flag* appeared included an article by the playwright, Hasegawa Yoshio, which supplied readers with background information on the relationship between Takarazuka and Germany; the geology and climate of Germany; German history, ethnic composition, agriculture and industry; and a review of the consequences of post-First World War inflation – Hasegawa defines ‘inflation’ for the readers – which occasioned Hitler’s emergence (Hasegawa 1941).

The Takarazuka playwrights and directors may have claimed to recreate specific cultural practices, but they often resorted to staging eclectic, pan-Asian spectacles, such as orchestrating Indonesian gamelan music and dances in plays set in Thailand (e.g. *Only One Ancestral Land*) (Matsumoto 1943a). Likewise, the revue *Saipan-Palau: Our South Seas* (*Saipan-Parao: Waga Nan’yō*), composed by a Takarazuka playwright following his research trip to the Japanese mandated islands, was described in a newspaper review as a ‘*pot-pourri* of the delicacies of South America, Mexico, Spain, and [North] America’ (Matsumoto 1940). (It is not clear from the reviewer’s comments that the play was actually set in Saipan or Palau.) The reviewer was disturbed not by the eclecticism of the spectacle, but by the ‘mistake’ the playwright made in musically representing, ‘native peoples who had neither dances nor tunes of their own’ (Matsumoto 1940). His assertion was, of course, erroneous and inconsistent with the well-documented ethnographic and ethnomusicological interests of Japanese colonialists and professional and amateur scholars in the South Seas since the turn of this century, including Matsuoka Shizuo, Tanabe Hisao, Katsuma Junzō and Hijikata Hisakatsu (Peattie 1988; Tsubouchi Hakase Kinen Engeki Hakubutsukan 1932: 482). Moreover, a South Seas cultural exhibition, sponsored by the South Seas Bureau (Nan’yōchō) – basically the Japanese colonial government in the South Seas (see Peattie 1988: 68-71) – was staged at the main theatre complex in Takarazuka to augment the ethnographic ‘infotainment’ contained in the play (Hagiwara 1954: 130).

Such cultural exhibitions tended to be held in conjunction with revues set in areas of national interest to imperial Japan. A good example is the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere series of plays and exhibitions inaugurated at the main revue theatre in Takarazuka in September 1941. *Mongol* (*Mongōru*, 1941), the first play in the series, was essentially a love story in which was embedded Japanese colonial propaganda extolling Mongolia’s natural resources (coal, livestock) and its entry into the Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japanese audiences were treated to actors dressed as Mongolians and to sets featuring the yurts inhabited by nomads.

They could even learn a few key phrases in Mongolian which had been incorporated into the scripted dialogue in the *katakana* syllabary, such as *moroguchibaaina* (thank you) and *sain baaina* (how are you).<sup>10</sup> Mongolian folk songs and dances were also performed throughout the eighteen-scene revue (*Mongōru* 1941).

Appearing with the *Mongol* script in the October 1941 anthology, was a photo-journalistic essay by the playwright, Utsu Hideo, detailing his fact-finding visit to Mongolia earlier that year. Utsu rhapsodizes about the natural beauty of the vast landscape filled with abundant wildlife, but seems equally enthusiastic about encroaching modernization in the form of factories for the production of butter and fabric. The rest of the article details the typical Mongolian diet of goat meat and fermented goat and horse milk, clothing, housing, festivals, folk dances and various other aspects of material and ritual culture (Utsu 1941). Extending and reinforcing the colonial anthropology lesson of both the revue and the playwright's essay, was a photograph exhibition of Mongolia displayed at the Takarazuka complex that continued throughout the play's one-month run.

A similar multimedia presentation accompanied the other revues in the Co-Prosperity Series, which included *Peking* (*Pekin*, 1942) and *Return to the East* (*Higashi e kaeru*, 1942), set in Thailand and which I shall discuss shortly. In addition, radio broadcasts of some Takarazuka performances were transmitted to Mongolia, China, Thailand, India and Burma with the aim of 'introducing Japanese theatre culture to the peoples living within the area of the Co-Prosperity Sphere' (Hagiwara 1954: 141). Multiple ironies framed the transmission of the play *Peking* to Mongolia and China on 5 June 1942 (Figure 1). Chinese listeners were treated to an ostensibly culturally authentic Japanese musical representation of Beijing and its apparently bilingual inhabitants, who spoke and sang in Japanese and Mandarin (rendered in *katakana*) about their 'love' (*ai*) for Japan and the benefits of colonial rule, which included 'progress and prosperity'.<sup>11</sup>

Orientalism aside, the transmission of *Peking* to China was part of the colonial strategy of Japanization, which also referred to the strategic effect that Takarazuka, among other theatrical forms, was to exert on peoples subjected to some form of Japanese domination or direct colonial rule. One component of the Revue's Japanization policy involved having 'real native' members of the audience vouch for the cultural authenticity of plays set in their respective countries. For instance, after watching *Peking* at the main Takarazuka theater, the Chinese ambassador to Japan remarked that:

*Peking* is superb. It weaves together skilfully the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and the awakening of Asian peoples. For us Chinese, what really clinches the play is the pan-Asian unity of the dancing and acting techniques. Whether staged in Hong Kong, Nanjing, or wherever Asian peoples live, *Peking* will generate appreciative applause. (Takarazuka Kagekidan 1943: 37)



**Figure 1** *Peking* finale. The finale of this 1942 production featured the 'Dance of the Five-Colour Flag,' which symbolized the unity of north and central China under Japan. From Takarazuka Kagekidan (1943: 15).

Similarly, the (Thai) director of the Thai Monopoly Bureau publicly declared about the play, *Return to the East*, that 'the stage sets, acting style, and choreography were redolent with the aura of Thai culture . . . I felt as though I had actually returned to my country' (Takarazuka Kagekidan 1943: 37).

The symbolically titled revue, *Return to the East* was the second drama in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere series. The series reflected, in part, Kobayashi's efforts as Minister of Commerce and Industry in the period 1940–41 to consolidate the newly conceived Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>12</sup> Based on a novel by a Thai official, a former finance minister, *Return to the East* promoted the vision of a Japan-centred New World Order (*sekai shinjitsujō*).<sup>13</sup> The novelist and a Thai choreographer were consulted in the creation and production of this play.

Briefly, the fifteen-scene play focuses on the short life of Rambha, the beautiful daughter of the deposed maharaja of Misapur in North India. Concerned for his infant daughter's safety, the maharaja had entrusted her upbringing to his best friend, the Thai ambassador to France and his wife, and the girl, unaware of her royal lineage, was educated at an elite French school. (The play opens with a formal reception at the school.) When she comes of age, the ambassador recounts her biography and urges her to return to the East and devote her life to restoring her late father's kingdom in Misapur. She travels to Japan, Thailand and India in order to learn more about her ancestral domain, and soon finalizes plans to transform Misapur into 'a strong country like Japan'.

While still a student in France, Rambha had fallen in love with Paul Roy, like her an 'Oriental' (*tōyōjin*) but unlike her, he was raised in a Bombay orphanage. Paul was later adopted by a wealthy Indian who moved to France where the boy was educated. The two teenagers shared a sense of alienation from their Asian roots and bemoaned the fact that they knew little about 'the East'. When she is bitten by a poisonous snake in Thailand, Paul rushes to her side to spur her recovery. Rambha has already decided to choose her country over Paul, but just as she is about to break her decision to him, the two discover that they are siblings. Rambha, recovered and relieved, journeys to Misapur, ravaged by a cholera epidemic, and, as planned, manages to win the heart of the current maharaja, Ravana, son of the usurper. She poisons the cruel Ravana and then commits suicide by swallowing poisoned tea. Paul ascends the throne as Bhumindra, the rightful maharaja of the now liberated Misapur (*Higashi e kaeru*, 1942: 40–68).

The intertwined themes of Western colonialism, patriotism, duty, imperialism, sibling incest, murder, and suicide form a present-day allegory of a pan-Asian past and future shared by Japan, Thailand and India.<sup>14</sup> Let me digress here for a moment. The dominant racial ideology in Japan contends that the origins of the Japanese race were held to be mystically linked to the Imperial House and thus to constitute an 'imperial family', a principle which could be extended outward to include new populations brought under Japanese dominion, so that these too could become 'imperial peoples' (*kōmin*) (Peattie 1984: 97; see also Robertson 2001). The relationship between Rambha and Paul/Bhumindra can be understood as an aestheticized refraction of the triangulated relationship Asia, Japan and Europe. Rambha's duty is to clear the way of obstacles (read, Westernists and local Anglophiles) in preparation for the emergence of pan-Asian co-prosperity spearheaded by Japan. Like Rambha and Paul, modern Japan had become alienated from its Eastern roots, but would be able to regain its identity and preeminence through extreme sacrifices made by non-Japanese Asians who were, theoretically, incorporated into the imperial family-system. A review of the play published in the Japanese press recommended that *Return to the East* be presented throughout Asia as well as in Germany and Italy, where the Takarazuka Revue had toured in 1938 and 1939 (Matsumoto 1942).

#### COLONIALISM AND MONTAGE

A discussion of the distinctive features of the revue theatre that made it an especially effective didactic, anthropological medium concludes this chapter. Japanese wartime ideologists were well aware that their success in claiming and containing national and colonized peoples alike was contingent upon the state's instrumental deployment of the entertainment media through which to shape popular consciousness. The usefulness of Takarazuka in creating a vision of a global hierarchy

headed by Japan was linked to the structure of the revue form itself. In keeping with its etymology, the 'revue' theatre represents a break from 'the past'; that is, a break from a fixed, singular, canonical reading of events past and present. Similar to photomontage – a potent medium of social critique, commentary and propaganda alike during the 1930s and 1940s – the revue offered 'completely new opportunities . . . for uncovering [and also remaking] relationships, oppositions, transitions and intersections of social reality' (Joachim Büthe quoted in Ollman 1991: 34). Revues consist of a montage-like display and concatenation of different, even contradictory, images, lands, settings, peoples and scenarios. Similarly, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere signified a new chain of historical associations and newly historicized memories; it represented a new system of cultural artifacts in the service of New Japan. The revue theatre was to serve this new order as an important proving ground where the composite image of a New Japan could be crafted, displayed and naturalized.

The meaning of montage, whether in photography or theatre, operates through allegory, which is essentially fragmentary. Allegory depends on the separation and isolation of elements comprising the totality of the life context. To work as allegory, montage necessarily requires the viewer's or audience's concatenation of the fragmented and juxtaposed images and scenarios.<sup>15</sup> As Peter Bürger describes this process: '[t]he allegorist joins the isolated fragments of reality and thereby creates meaning. This is posited meaning; it does not derive from the original context of the fragments' (quoted in Buck-Morss 1991 [1989]: 225).

Like montage, ethnographies have also been described as recombinations of fragments of, at the very least, the reality of both anthropologists and their subjects. In his introduction to *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford asserts that the creator of ethnographic texts cannot avoid allegories that select and impose meaning as they translate it. Power and history work through ethnographic texts, he cautions, in ways their authors cannot fully control, and notes that 'ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial' (1986: 6–7).

The revue theatre and ethnography alike share certain salient, montage-like features which were purposefully deployed in the context of colonialism. In the case of wartime revues in particular, such as *Mongol*, it was a common practice to call for a narrator, either a character in a play or an 'emcee'-like figure, to emerge at regular intervals and synthesize the various dramatic fragments or scenes for the viewers. Theoretically, this action would reduce the degree of slippage between the performance, its reception, and its lasting effects. The simultaneous appearance of ethnographic essays written by Takarazuka playwrights and the cultural exhibitions staged at the complex, can also be interpreted as attempts to reduce – ironically, in light of Clifford's caution – through the over-determined display or concatenation of select information, the slippage between the official message of a given revue and the message(s) extracted by individual members of the audience.

As a performative and spectacular extension and adaptation of colonial ethnography, the revue theatre helped to bridge the gap between perceptions of colonialized others and actual colonial encounters; it was one way of linking imperialist dreams and colonial realities. Takarazuka wartime productions functioned as a type of 'human relations area file' or archive which, along with census reports, maps, photographs, ethnographies, statistics and news-reels, worked to create and naturalize among Japanese and colonized peoples alike, a warped but pleasurable if partial vision of co-prosperity in the New World Order.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Daitōa kyōeiken*, or Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, was an integral part of Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro's idea of a 'New Order' in which the Japanese would lead a Pan-Asian effort towards Asian self-sufficiency and stability, and resist both communism, and Western imperialism. The projected area of the Sphere covered Japan, China, Manchukuo, the former Dutch, French, and British colonies in Southeast Asia, and the Philippines. Some ideologues included Australia and New Zealand in the projected area (Hunter 1984: 42, 143–4).
- <sup>2</sup> This chapter incorporates material from earlier publications (Robertson 1995, 1998 and 2001 [1998]). There is relatively little research on the ways in which theatre interfaces with imperialism and colonialism. In the case of Japanese studies, the uses of film and radio as vehicles for the spiritual and physical mobilization of the Japanese and colonial peoples have been expertly documented and discussed (e.g. Dower 1993; Fukushima and Nornes 1991; Goodman 1991; Hauser 1991; Kasza 1988; Silverberg 1993). However there is a dearth of critical research on wartime theatre, where staged performances operated as social metacommentaries on and motivators for such interconnected practices as nationalism, imperialism, racism, militarism, sexual politics and gendered relations (cf. Bratton 1991; Pickering 1991: 229). Similarly, theatre-state relations are overlooked or ignored in the otherwise excellent scholarship on the Japanese colonial empire (Beasley 1987; Dower 1986; Duus, Myers and Peattie 1989; Myers and Peattie 1984; Peattie 1988; Shillony 1991 [1981], et al.). Rimer (1974) offers a complementary overview of the New

Theatre (Shingeki) movement through the career of the playwright, Kishida Kunio. In this chapter, I do not examine the role of 'guerilla plays' staged in China, the Philippines, Indonesia and elsewhere to oppose and resist Japanese imperialism and colonialist policies.

- <sup>3</sup> In the United States, the provocative use of the living newspaper form was associated with the American Federal Theatre Project of the 1930s. The boundary between actor and audience was blurred by the practice of planting actors in the audience to ask questions during the play or challenge the ongoing action. Housing, health care, public utilities, labour organizing and consumer unions were among the issues dramatized, and the plays 'usually concluded that working people could (and should) solve the problems either by taking action themselves or by demanding that their elected representatives act for them' (O'Connor 1985: 179–80). As a movement, the 'living newspaper' was initiated in 1923 by students from the Institute of Journalism in Moscow who formed the Blue Blouse company. A typical living newspaper programme consisted of headlines, news items, editorials, cartoons and official decrees, the intention being to make current events and themes 'penetrate the masses more deeply' (Stourac and McCreery 1986: 3, 30).
- <sup>4</sup> There were other all-female revue theatres established in the early twentieth century as well, notably the Shōchiku Revue founded in Tokyo (in Asakusa, a major working-class theatre district) in 1928, which quickly became Takarazuka's main rival in every respect. Other, much smaller, Tokyo revues included the Casino Folies (opened in 1929) in Asakusa, and the Moulin Rouge (opened in 1931) in Shinjuku, a student and intellectual centre at the time (see Seidensticker 1990: 68–87).
- <sup>5</sup> Although the main theatre was reopened after the war in April 1946, the Tokyo facility fell under the jurisdiction of the Allied Powers General Headquarters headed by General Douglas MacArthur. It was renamed the Ernie Pyle Theatre – after the popular American war correspondent killed in action in 1945 – until reverting back to Kobayashi's control in April 1955 (Hashimoto 1993: 78, 84; Toita 1956 [1950]: 244). Throughout the Occupation period (1945–52), Tokyo Takarazuka performances were staged at other local theatres, and the Revue produced special shows for Occupation personnel at the Ernie Pyle (Hashimoto 1993: 142).
- <sup>6</sup> I have published extensively on the sexual politics and gender ideology operative in the Takarazuka Revue and shall not repeat that information here in the interest of focusing on the relationship between theatre and colonial anthropology (see Robertson 2001 [1998]).
- <sup>7</sup> Unlike Carrier (1992), I find it unnecessarily complicated to divide O/orientalism into unmarked (what 'the West' does) and marked (the ethno-orientalisms of the non-West) categories. In using the lower case form, I wish to draw a distinction between the products of Orientalism (i.e. 'the West' and 'the Other') and the orientalizing process through which a national or cultural dominant is constructed and dramatized. I have retained the term 'orientalism' as both it and its overtones are salient in the context of Japanese imperialist expansion and colonial domination. As Stefan Tanaka notes in *Japan's Orient*, by the twentieth century, *tōyō* (literally, eastern seas) signified the opposite of 'the

Occident' in both a geopolitical sense and an ideological sense (1993: 4). He argues that the contested discourse of *tōyō*/the orient helped to occasion a new sense of national and cultural identity in Japan even as it revealed the ambiguity of Japan's place in Asia and the world (1993: 11–2).

- 8 Some scholars have argued that Japanese orientalism was so totalizing that it obviated the need for the concomitant deployment of an equally evolved Japanese occidentalism in order to dramatize and allegorize 'original' differences. As Tanaka notes in this respect, 'Whereas Romantic [European] historians looked to the Orient for their origins, Japanese historians found them in *tōyō* [the orient]' (1993: 14). The widest line of difference was drawn not between Japan and 'the West', but between Japan and the rest of the world.
- 9 New China, or *shinkō shina*, refers to parts of China under Japanese control. *Shina*, in use since the mid-eighteenth century as a name for European-dominated China, is regarded today as a pejorative term for China.
- 10 This transcription is the anglicized version of the Japanese syllabic rendition of the Mongolian expression as it appeared in the script.
- 11 Similarly, the 'patriotic extravaganzas' staged in English music halls at the turn of this century invariably presented the British colonies as 'willingly subservient', masking palpable tensions between the colonizers and the colonized (Summerfield 1986: 29).
- 12 Kobayashi travelled to Batavia (Jakarta) in the fall of 1940 to secure Indonesia's place in the Sphere by seeking, unsuccessfully, to obtain mineral oil and other concessions from the Dutch (Beasley 1987: 228–9; Hall 1981 [1955]: 858–9; Mook 1944: 42–65).
- 13 Phra Sarasas, a bureaucrat and proponent of Thai-Japanese entente who resided in Japan between 1939 and 1945. The original title of the novel, a 'fable of political morals' (Batson 1996: 156) written in 'flowery English' (Matsumoto 1942) and first published in London in 1940, is *Whom the Gods Deny*. It was translated into Japanese as *Unmei no kawa* (River of Fate).
- 14 It is striking how *Return to the East* also anticipates the militant nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose's path from India to South-east Asia via Germany and Japan. In 1943, he proclaimed a Provisional Government of *Azad Hind* (Free India) and led the Japanese-supported Indian National Army, recruited before his arrival, in anticipation of an invasion of India. Bose's activity was followed closely in Japanese domestic and colonial newspapers.
- 15 Because a single concatenated meaning cannot be guaranteed, montage generates a tension between the dominant meaning and the subtextual, and potentially subversive, readings of the same performance. Once an audience disperses and re-enters the wider social realm, the two-fold problem remains of how to reinforce the official text of a play, and how to accurately measure any influence that the performance may have had on their behaviour (cf. Kershaw 1992: 2).