

bargaining. By the 1880s he sees it as taking on a much more bureaucratic complexion, as skilled workers became radicalized and as trade union right-wingers were propped up by parliamentary alliances and the development of welfare policies. This analysis is not mentioned. Nor, even more surprisingly, is the work of Neville Kirk. If the labour aristocracy has a demonstrable origin and rationale, it is most clearly to be found in the profound reassessment of political strategies and values which occurred at both governmental and local levels in the 1840s and 1850s. It is in Kirk's studies of this period that we find the most comprehensive treatment – and one which makes it clear that we are not dealing with some mechanical linkage of wage differentials to politics but rather a politically negotiated and tactically contingent conferment of rights that were themselves as yet of uncertain consequence.

Overall, therefore, Lummis's contribution is not to the debate on the labour aristocracy. It is to social history more generally, and the book might have been better entitled *Job Security and Politics in Victorian Britain: an exploratory essay*.

John Foster

WEINER, MICHAEL. *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan.* [The Sheffield Centre for Japanese Studies/Routledge Series.] Routledge, London [etc.] 1994. xi, 278 pp. £37.50.

Japan is said to be one of the most homogeneous societies on earth and unusually resistant to migrant labour from overseas. Indeed, until illegal workers from other Asian countries appeared in great numbers in the late 1980s, the Japanese had repeatedly rejected the possibility of employing "guest workers" during the post-war era. Michael Weiner reminds us that Japanese labour markets were not always so closed. The nation's most significant twentieth-century encounter with foreign migrants occurred before, not after, World War II, as large numbers of labourers journeyed to Japan from Korea, a Japanese colony from 1910 to 1945. This is not the first account of resident Koreans in Japan. The author himself has written another book on the Korean community. This is, however, the first English-language study to analyse how the construction of "race" affected labour in Japan before 1945. Weiner also offers an informative, well-researched account of aspects of Japan's colonial administration of Korea and their impact on both the migration of Korean workers and the hostile reception that awaited them in Japan.

The author, a historian of Japan, does not use Korean-language sources, and this, of course, tends to muffle the voices of Korean workers. Nevertheless, Weiner draws extensively on seldom-used reports by Japanese police and social affairs agencies, and he offers readers in the West, to date, the most comprehensive examination of the conditions of Korean labourers in Japan and their relationships with Japanese workers and the state.

At the theoretical level, the study challenges earlier work on minorities in Japan that generally accepted "race" as immutable and unproblematic. Weiner argues that "racial ideology and policies are neither fixed in content, nor simply a consequence of capitalism or late-nineteenth-century imperialism" (p. 12). Consisting of a loose set of often contradictory discourses, Japanese racial

ideologies regarding Koreans could at different times lead to savage repression, ambitious “civilizing” and educational projects, toleration of Korean “cultural nationalism”, or the brutal assimilationist policies that eventually forbade Koreans to speak their own language or use their own names. Specifically the author profiles the development of an official and societal discourse that depicted the Korean worker as, by nature, “indolent, clumsy and slow moving” and “completely insensitive to filth” (p. 126). This racial myth, he suggests, emerged from (1) the fundamental assumptions of Japanese superiority upon which colonial rule was based and (2) the nature of the Japanese labour market, which compelled Korean migrants to work in the dirtiest, lowest-paying, and least desirable jobs.

To my mind, Weiner’s most important contribution is his integration of the history of Korean migrants and the history of labour. Few, if any, Western historians of inter-war Japan have paid attention to ethnic divisions among workers. In this account, we learn that ethnicity mattered. As many as 30,000 workers belonged to Rōsō (Federation of Korean Labor in Japan) in 1927 at a time when the total number of trade unionists in Japan stood at only 300,000. Rōsō’s demands for Korean independence – and perhaps Japanese union members’ fears of competition from foreign workers – put the Korean federation at odds with the leading moderate federation, Sōdōmei. Rōsō’s increasing cooperation with Korean student radicals and Japanese left-wing elements appears to have encouraged the police to crack down on the leftist labour movement as a whole in the late 1920s. In his fine chapter on Korean migrant labour from 1925 to 1938, he further demonstrates that many of the Depression-era industrial disputes of the early 1930s involved Korean and Japanese workers teaming up to protest against massive lay-offs, which fell disproportionately on the Koreans. Finally, his examination of the abysmal conditions in which conscripted Koreans worked in mines and the construction jobs during the Pacific War (1941–1945) does much to explain why Koreans took the lead in organizing strikes in the first months following Japan’s defeat. It also illuminates the sources of Japanese perceptions of the typical Korean migrant as radical and militant, even if most were not.

Equally significant, Weiner spotlights the many episodes of tensions that impeded solidarity between Korean and Japanese workers. The willingness of Koreans to work for considerably less pay prompted some Japanese unions to press for immigration restrictions. In addition, the author presents vivid descriptions of Japanese companies’ efforts to mobilize Japanese employees as strikebreakers against Korean labourers in the early 1930s. One wishes, however, that he had rigorously analysed anti-Korean sentiments among Japanese workers and the general populace during the 1920s, as well. In his explanations of why Japanese vigilantes killed thousands of Koreans in the wake of the great Tokyo-area earthquake in 1923, he may have focused too much on the logic of Japanese colonial domination of Korea and not enough on locally and economically based antipathies toward Korean migrants.

This is a richly documented study with a cogent argument, but there are areas that might have been further developed. To begin with, the author appears to have ignored his own warning against accepting “race” as unproblematic. The “Japanese” working class remains undifferentiated in this book. Did Japanese day labourers, for example, relate to Korean day labourers in a different way from the skilled workmen who made up the mainstream of the Japanese labour

movement? Moreover, Japanese outcastes (*burakumin*) and Koreans would have held similar jobs in construction and day-labour markets in the Osaka-Kobe area. Their proximity raises important questions of how the Japanese state and society constructed racial and ethnic categories. One also suspects that gender played a role in the discourse of race. During the 1920s, Korean workers moved heavily into coalmining soon after legislation barred women from working underground. Similarly, at the height of the Pacific War, the Japanese government confronted the dilemma of whether to fill jobs vacated by mobilized Japanese males either with Japanese women or conscripted Korean labourers.

Then there is the question of how to understand the multifaceted policies of the state officials who dealt with Koreans, both within Japan and in Korea. Their penchant for suppressing Korean dissidents or conveying racial ideologies comes across clearly in this study. It is less obvious why officials would have enfranchised resident Koreans on more or less the same basis as Japanese (although Koreans living in colonial Korea remained disenfranchised), or why Japanese administrators thought it important to introduce mass elementary education in Korea to a far greater extent than Europeans did in their own colonies. The reader might further question why a colonial power that wanted to maintain the racial inferiority of Koreans would allow the number of Koreans studying in Japanese universities to soar from 214 in 1925 to 6,000 in 1940. This is not to say that Japanese officials sought to integrate Koreans as fully-fledged Japanese subjects. None the less, the author might have done more to contextualize official thinking. The higher civil servants who promoted “conciliation” works in Korean communities in Japan or accommodated “cultural nationalists” in Korea were at the same time appealing to moderate Japanese trade unionists with a mix of positive social policies and repression of their left-wing rivals. Could it be that a comparable “candy and whip” strategy, as it was called, informed policies toward Koreans?

Other questions are similarly left unanswered. Hundreds of thousands of Koreans streamed into Japan between 1925 and the onset of wartime labour conscription, despite Japan’s tight control over Korea and restrictive immigration policies at home. Was this the result of bureaucratic ineptitude, or did officials deliberately permit and even encourage migration, possibly to relieve rural Korean poverty or remedy labour scarcities with illegal aliens who were in a weak position to protest against poor working conditions? Elsewhere, in the chapter on “assimilation and opposition”, Weiner might have discussed whether assimilationist policies offered anything positive to some Korean migrants. Did the authorities encourage the development of a cooperative middle class or leadership group within Korean communities, as they systematically did in Japanese neighbourhoods? Did belonging to state-recognized mutual support groups like the *Sōaikai* offer Korean residents any benefits other than taking part in strikebreaking against their brethren?

This is a fascinating topic, and Weiner has opened up new areas of enquiry in Japanese labour history. Having posed a set of important questions, he is also sure to stimulate the emerging group of scholars who study Korean and Japanese interaction during the colonial era.

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