

School Politics in the Borderlands and Colonies of Imperial Germany: A Japanese Colonial Perspective, ca. 1900–1925

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Abstract

The history of German-Japanese relations prior to 1914 has often been characterized by the similarities between the two newly established nations and the transfer of knowledge between them—mostly from Germany to Japan—for the sake of building a modern nation-state. This article critically reconsiders that view, particularly with regard to school and language education, by taking the colonial dimension into consideration. By focusing on reports commissioned by the colonial government in Korea and an inquiry by that of Taiwan on the eve of the First World War, the author shows that the Japanese colonial empire increasingly paid attention to Imperial Germany alongside other colonial powers such as Great Britain and France. It is striking that the Japanese search for a model or a reference point shifted between Germany's remote overseas colonies and metropole borderlands with minorities, such as Prussian Poland and Alsace-Lorraine, and that the colonial governments in Korea and Taiwan addressed them on their different agendas. After 1918, Germany was no longer a role model; however, it came to serve as a history lesson or negative foil justifying self-praise by Japan and was, at the same time, used by the colonized people to strengthen their self-assertion.

Keywords: German Empire, borderlands, colonies, Alsace-Lorraine, Prussian Poland, school politics, transfer of colonial knowledge

Introduction

In 1912, the Japanese educational scientist Nakajima Hanjirō from Waseda University in Tokyo commented in his book, *Doitsu kyōiku kenbunki* (My observations of German education):

If we are looking for a country that is more similar to our own than any other in the world, it has to be Germany.... Only in Germany, the power of the single state rulers is seen as sacrosanct, and their civil servants are highly esteemed, even though German federalism prevents the

establishment of one single sovereign holding state power.... Today, our country considers Germany as an example, rather than Great Britain, France, and the United States, which were previously role models. This is not only due to Germany's significant progress in various areas, but also because, from a Japanese perspective, the political similarities between the two countries make Germany the best country to learn from. Both Germany and Japan are aspiring countries in the West and East respectively, ambitious and uninhibited; neither shies away from emulating the achievements of other countries. This is why Germans always refer to Japan as the most similar and friendly state. (Nakajima 1912, 583–584)

This contemporary quotation from the end of the Meiji era (1868–1912) reflects the master narrative of the history of German-Japanese relations during the second half of the nineteenth century up to the outbreak of the First World War. In this narrative of Germany as a model for Japanese modern nation-state building, the transfer of knowledge played an important role. It was practiced not only through reading German publications in Japan, but also through academic exchanges between the countries, such as inviting German scholars to Japan and sending young Japanese academics to Germany.

Recently, this narrative has, on the one hand, been criticized for overestimating German influence and limiting its focus on bilateral relations (Takenaka 2016). On the other hand, the fact that this narrative sees the transfer of modern knowledge exclusively through the lens of the nation-state has hardly been questioned. This perspective must also be critically differentiated based on the fact that Japan only fully regained autonomous customs regulations—an important aspect of the sovereign nation-state—in 1911 (Yamamuro 2006). This means that before Japan met this crucial requirement to be a nation-state, it was already a colonial power. In two victorious wars around the turn of the century Japan acquired several colonies: the island of Formosa (now Taiwan) during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895); South Sakhalin and Guandong (the latter as a leased territory) during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905); and the Korean peninsula, which became a protectorate in 1905 and was annexed in 1910.

In the historiography of the transfer of colonial knowledge to Japan, Germany plays a minor role compared to other colonial empires such as Great Britain, France, or even the United States. Much attention has been paid, for example, to India and Egypt under British rule, Indochina and Madagascar under French rule, and the Philippines and Hawai'i under American rule. It has often been pointed out that the reason is that Germany was a belated and short-lived colonial power (from the mid-1880s until 1918–1919). However, Germany was also a “belated nation” (Plessner 1959) and nonetheless attracted much interest among the Japanese elite. For this reason, it is worth examining

how the Japanese colonial empire regarded Imperial Germany as a European *and* a colonial power.¹

Indeed, recent research has modified the simplistic notion of Imperial Germany as a belated and short-lived colonial empire, from the perspective of global history connecting metropole and colonies.² Of particular interest here is that borderlands and overseas colonies are seen as interrelated to each other rather than being regarded as separate. As historian Philipp Ther has put it, “In order to maintain imperial rule over the Polish partition territory, Imperial Germany and its elites adopted colonial thought patterns and ideologies. Maritime and continental colonialism are only comprehensible when considered together” (2004, 148–149). This perspective has been further developed by a series of studies during the last decade by, for example, Dörte Lerp (2016), who analyzes settlement colonialism in Prussian Poland and German Southwest Africa (now Namibia), exploring transformations in practice and the possible transfers between them. Lerp stresses that the transimperial circulation of colonial knowledge on settlement policy extended beyond the Atlantic.³ North American settlement schemes based on the homestead influenced the “inner colonization” of the eastern Prussian provinces, which, in turn, attracted great interest from Japanese colonial elites. Among them was the civil governor of Taiwan, Gotō Shinpei, who visited the settlement commission and a model village in Poznan (Posen) in 1903 to “seek instructions for the colonization of Taiwan” (Lerp 2016, 169).

Unsurprisingly, the scope of Japanese interest was not limited to settlement policies.⁴ The competition among the elite modern states compelled them to gather references and information from other states, which enabled the implementation of potential reforms in many fields, along with strategies ranging from “imperializing nation-states” to “nationalizing empires” (von Hirschhausen and Leonhard 2010). Current research focuses on the accumulation and circulation of colonial knowledge through new concepts such as the “imperial cloud” (Kamissek and Kreienbaum 2016) and “imperial co-operation” (Barth and Cvetkovski 2015).

Against this backdrop, this article analyzes some examples that show how Japan as a colonial power was interested in school policy in German borderlands and colonies—an integral part of colonial rule influencing exclusion and inclusion, or, put differently, territorial integration and cultural assimilation⁵—focusing on the two colonial

¹ Leo Ching writes, “Although Japanese colonialism, especially in terms of its colonial policy of assimilating its subjects, has often been compared to French colonialism, the general structure of its colonial experience and aftermath is probably much closer to the German case” (2001, 32).

² For the new historiography of German colonialism, see Conrad (2011) and Naranch and Eley (2014).

³ On the transatlantic transfer of knowledge between the United States, on the one hand, and the German Empire and its colonies in Africa, on the other, see Zimmerman (2010).

⁴ On the history of Japanese settlers in colonies, see, for example, Uchida (2011) on Korea.

⁵ There is a vast literature on school policies and politics in each colony in addition to comparative studies. One noteworthy approach is the critical reassessment of the colonialist

governments of Korea and Taiwan. The article focuses on three reports submitted by Japanese scholars in 1913 to the Japanese colonial government of Korea about German school policy in its border regions—the eastern Prussian provinces in the East and Alsace-Lorraine in the West. Both areas can be considered as minorities in the German nation, though they differ in important ways that are discussed later in this article. These reports are certainly not unknown among historians and sociolinguists, some of whom see in them a colonial parallel between Germany-Poland, on the one hand, and Japan-Korea, on the other.⁶ However, the three reports have often been discussed out of context, without taking into consideration the political aspect—that the German government rejected their authors' requests to visit schools. Furthermore, another Japanese colony, Taiwan, has been largely neglected in this context.⁷ By comparing these reports, as well as the two colonies themselves, this article outlines the shifting interest of Japanese colonial governments. Finally, it asks how the situation changed after 1918 and what traces can be found, even indirectly, in the implementations of Japanese colonial policies.

Borderlands as “Internal Colonies”: Korea

The Rejected Request to Visit Schools in the German Borderlands: The Case of Sakaguchi

In 1906, the German Foreign Office began systematically compiling documents concerning permissions to visit schools in Imperial Germany, sorted by the country of origin of the applicants. According to these sources, sixty-nine delegations with eighty Japanese scientists, pedagogues, technocrats, and military officers submitted requests to obtain such permissions between 1906 and 1914,⁸ commissioned mainly by the Japanese government.⁹ Almost every request was approved without problems, including that of the aforementioned Nakajima, whose book was a product of his visit to

character inherent in the academic discipline “comparative education” (mainly in the United States) by Takayama, Sriprakash, and Connell (2017).

⁶ As detailed in the next section, Sakaguchi Takashi submitted one report that treated both Prussian Poland and Alsace-Lorraine, and Hoshina Kōichi submitted one report for Prussian Poland and another for Alsace-Lorraine. On Sakaaguchi's report, see Kuroda and Leschinsky (2007) and Nishiyama (2008). On Hoshina's report, from a sociolinguistic perspective, see Yi (1996).

⁷ On Taiwan under Japanese rule in general, see Liao and Wang (2006).

⁸ The numbers are my own calculations, based on documents from 1906 to 1914: Bundesarchiv Berlin (BAB), R901/38491-38494; for 1914, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PAAA), R63081. For the period before 1906, there are no compiled documents on this subject. From 1906 on, the documents were compiled by state.

⁹ Those foreigners who wanted to visit schools and attend classes in one or several states of Imperial Germany had to obtain permission from the minister of education of the states concerned. In 1904, the Prussian minister of education extended its scope of permission from secondary and higher education (which a decree of 1893 had already made obligatory) to primary education (“Besichtigungen von Anstalten” 1904).

Germany. Only two applications were rejected, both commissioned by the Japanese colonial government of Korea that had been recently established in 1910.¹⁰ The first rejected applicant was a historian, Sakaguchi Takashi (1872–1928), who issued his request in 1911; the second, a linguist, Hoshina Kōichi (1872–1955), one year later. Both were studying in Germany at the time. Sakaguchi was an assistant professor at Kyoto Imperial University and a disciple of the German historian Ludwig Riess, who had taught in the history department of Tokyo Imperial University from 1886 to 1901 and brought modern historiography to Japan. Sakaguchi's primary area of research was ancient Greece and the Renaissance. Hoshina was a professor at the Higher Normal School of Tokyo who had taken courses taught by the British linguist Basil Hall Chamberlain, also at Tokyo Imperial University. Sakaguchi and Hoshina belonged to the "post-Restoration" academic generation, which enjoyed a modern higher education in Japan as well as abroad.¹¹

In Sakaguchi's request, which the Japanese embassy sent to the German Foreign Office in July 1911, he stated that he intended "to enquire about schools and school policy in the Prussian Eastern Marches, particularly in Poznan, and in Alsace-Lorraine, and visit some teaching facilities and institutes."¹² In reply to the corresponding request from the German Foreign Office, the Prussian Ministry of Educational and Cultural Affairs voiced its concerns:

Due to previous experiences with foreign observers, it seems to be out of the question to allow Professor Sakaguchi to travel around in the province of Poznan and visit elementary schools at his leisure. The leading Polish circles would soon learn about the information-gathering tour of the Japanese and provide guidance and "enlightenment" according to their own interests. On the other hand, it would be unwise

¹⁰ Although the first educational edict was already promulgated in 1911, these commissions by the government suggest that it needed more information from Europe to implement future reforms. On the other hand, this is not to say that Japanese government was interested in the German borderlands only after the formal annexation. Already in 1905, when Korea became a Japanese protectorate, the Japanese school administration had begun to introduce Japanese into the curriculum of Korean schools. To determine the appropriate hours for Japanese instruction in Korea, the colonial government studied the example of Alsace-Lorraine just after its annexation (Kubota 2005, 154–155).

¹¹ The background story behind their selection by the colonial government in Korea cannot be exactly determined, though Hoshina had, according to his own recollection, already been sent to Europe by the Ministry of Education as a reward for his activities in the research committee of national language founded by the ministry (Yi 1996, 272).

¹² BAB, R901-38493, Japanese Ambassador Chinda to Berlin to Secretary of State Kiderlen-Wächter, July 6, 1911.

to refuse the request. It would give the impression that the Prussian schools administration had something to hide.¹³

The Ministry of Educational and Cultural Affairs suggested allowing Sakaguchi to visit schools only if accompanied by school inspectors. By contrast, the government of Alsace-Lorraine approved the request without reservation.¹⁴ Having received these different answers, the German Foreign Office, which thought that “politically, there are no special considerations to favor Sakaguchi’s request,” decided to reject it on the grounds that “schools in the border regions are less suitable for study purposes due to their specific conditions and that visiting these sites for those purposes cannot be allowed for foreigners according to the existing administrative regulations.”¹⁵

Dissatisfied with the refusal, Sakaguchi went to Strasbourg to contact the director of the local school administration and ask for his approval directly.¹⁶ This request also was rejected. The German Foreign Office was informed about the incident and subsequently expressed its displeasure toward the Japanese embassy.¹⁷ As a result, the request of the second Japanese scholar, Hoshina, to visit schools in Poznan, Bydgoszcz (Bromberg), Wrocław (Breslau), and Strasbourg was also dismissed, but visits in Cologne, Frankfurt am Main, and Hanover were accepted.¹⁸ Whereas Sakaguchi had named Poznan and West Prussia for his visit in the East, Hoshina added Wrocław to his

¹³ BAB, R901-38493, Prussian Minister of Educational and Cultural Affairs von Trott zu Solz to the German Foreign Office, July 13, 1911.

¹⁴ BAB, R901-38493, Governor of Alsace-Lorraine to the German Foreign Office, July 19, 1911.

¹⁵ BAB, R901-38493, Secretary of State Kiderlen-Wächter to the Japanese Ambassador to Berlin Chinda, August 9, 1911. However, the request of the Quebecois politician Henri Bourassa from Montreal in late June 1914, mediated by Lord Haldane, was accepted by the Foreign Office, which wanted to maintain diplomatic channels to Great Britain, though Bourassa expressed his intention, like Sakaguchi, “to study the education system not only from the perspective of the administration, but also from that of the people” (Archives Départementales du Bas-Rhin [ADBR], 105AL1550, German Ambassador Lichnowski to London to the German Foreign Office, June 20, 1914; Governor of Alsace-Lorraine to the Foreign Office, July 2, 1914). Bourassa came to Alsace in late July but had to interrupt his tour because of the outbreak of the First World War.

¹⁶ BAB, R901-38493, Governor of Alsace-Lorraine to Reich Chancellor (Foreign Office), November 8, 1911, with handwritten text by Sakaguchi (“Past and Present”) listing fourteen reasons to support his endeavor.

¹⁷ BAB, R901-38493, Secretary of State Kiderlen-Wächter to the Japanese Ambassador to Berlin Chinda, November 21, 1911. Some of the documents related to Sakaguchi’s case were copied in the compilation file (rotulus) of the Foreign Office concerning trouble with foreign delegations (PAAA, R63073).

¹⁸ Dr. Albrecht, director of the *Oberschulrat* (the highest institution of school administration) for Alsace-Lorraine, who had talked with Sakaguchi, wrote in an annotation (May 4, 1912) regarding Hoshina, “Through private channels I have learned that the visit of Prof. Dr. Sakaguchi last year, which ran contrary to diplomatic guidelines, had the purpose of gathering information to be used by the Japanese government in regard to the bilingual territory of the island of Formosa [*sic*—he mistook Korea for Formosa]” (ADBR, 105AL1551).

request. The reason for the rejection of his visit to the capital of the province Silesia was that “it is located in the Eastern territory.”¹⁹

Political Background of the Different Reactions of the Administrations

Interestingly, around the same time that Sakaguchi and Hoshina were denied permission, a Japanese engineer from the South Manchurian Railway Society was allowed to visit Technical University of Wrocław without restriction. This permission showed that the problem was not the location itself but the type of educational institution that the Japanese wanted to observe.

As indicated in the statement made by the Prussian Ministry of Educational and Cultural Affairs, school policy in Prussian Poland provoked serious German-Polish ethnic conflicts around the turn of the century. The Polish language as an elementary school subject had already been banned in the 1870s following the unification of the German nation-state and the Bismarck administration’s persecution of the Catholic church, particularly in Prussian Poland. After the unsuccessful attempt of Chancellor Caprivi, Bismarck’s successor, to appease the Poles by allowing private schools to teach Polish, the administration started targeting religious education, which the schools had previously been allowed to teach in Polish, in about 1900. This regulation was now withdrawn. This Germanization measure, which attacked the last bastion of Polish in public education, caused outrage and heavy protests by the Polish population. School strikes in Poznan and West Prussia from 1906 to 1907, as well as a dramatic incident in Września (Wreschen) in 1901, created a stir, nationally and internationally (see Korth [1963] and Kulczycki [1981]). In the small town of Września, near Poznan, an elementary teacher had beaten school students who refused to answer in German, and some of the protesting Polish parents and inhabitants of the town were arrested and sentenced. The international press strongly criticized this incident; even the International Socialist Bureau, the executive body of the Second International, condemned the Prussian school administration in a resolution (“First Meeting” 1901/1902, 597).

In addition to the cultural assimilation policy through school education, the German settlement policy in the eastern provinces of Prussia starting in 1886 continuously fueled ethnic conflicts. The immigration of Poles (and Jews) from the Russian and Hapsburg empires was strictly controlled and, in some cases, admission to Germany was denied. Additionally, the settlement commission was established to purchase estates from Polish landowners and sell them to German peasants from the West in order to strengthen the German ethnic presence in the Polish-dominant provinces. This activity provoked a strong Polish counter-movement, which in turn led to the implementation of a law allowing the forced expropriation of the estates of Polish landowners in 1908.

Unlike in Prussian Poland, settlement policy was not pursued in Alsace-Lorraine. Immediately after the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871, about fifty thousand

¹⁹ BAB, R901/38493, Foreign Office to Prussian Ministry of Educational and Cultural Affairs, April 26, 1912.

inhabitants (about 3 to 4 percent of the population) exercised their right to opt for French nationality and left the then-German borderland. Subsequently, the direction of migration remained mainly from East to West: the emigration of local inhabitants to France or the United States was compensated by the immigration of Germans across the Rhine.

Language education in elementary schools in German-speaking areas of Alsace-Lorraine—where, according to statistics of 1910, the German-speaking population amounted to 87 percent of the total population—also became increasingly politicized. Starting in 1873, after a short moratorium of transition, French as a school subject was excluded from the curriculum of elementary schools in these areas. Around 1900, this development was accompanied by a debate among local intellectuals on the Franco-German “dual culture” of the border region²⁰ and the claim of the autonomist movement to turn Alsace-Lorraine—the *Reichsland* (imperial territory)—into a federal state along the lines of Prussia, Bavaria, or Saxony. Particularly between 1908 and 1911, the demand to restore French to the curriculum increased, supported by the Francophile members of the *Landesausschuss*, the regional consultative assembly. The government steadfastly refused this demand on the grounds that elementary education should be taught exclusively in the native language of the students. This principle was not applied to French-speaking and mixed-language areas. However, French could be taught in these areas, and the number of French lessons varied according to the proportion of French-speaking inhabitants in a community (Lombard 1909).²¹

Therefore, it is unsurprising that language-education policy did not politically mobilize the local population in Alsace-Lorraine as much as in Prussian Poland. Around the time that Sakaguchi visited Strasbourg in 1911, the constitution of Alsace-Lorraine was introduced, which accorded certain, albeit not full, autonomy to the region, and replaced the *Landesausschuss* with a *Landtag*, a regional diet based on universal male suffrage. In this *Landtag*, the demand for bilingual education in German-speaking areas did not command a majority. The regional administration itself was conscious of its relatively liberal policy of language education, as shown in how the state secretary responded to a critical comment in 1896 by a member of the *Landesausschuss* from Lorraine that accused the German administration of systematically oppressing the French:

If the honorable member were aware exactly of how foreign-speaking areas in Prussia and Alsace-Lorraine are treated respectively, then he would, from his viewpoint, have admired us with the highest

²⁰ On the debate about national and regional identities in Alsace-Lorraine, see Mollenhauer (2005) and Fischer (2014).

²¹ Both Hoshina and Sakaguchi quoted a book by Julian Lombard, school inspector of the bilingual district of Molsheim in Lower Alsace. Hoshina included a nearly complete translation. On school policy in Alsace-Lorraine, see Harp (1998) and Rimmelé (1996) as a comparative study with Prussian Poland.

compliments. For, if I remember correctly, while Polish is not taught in Prussia, sufficient time is given for teaching elementary school-level French in French-speaking Lorraine. (Landesausschuss für Elsass-Lothringen 1896)

This response did not calm the political atmosphere of the borderland between Germany and France. Tensions arose, particularly in the wake of a 1913 clash between the military and local civilians in the small Alsatian town Saverne (Zabern) caused by a discriminating remark from a young Prussian officer vis-à-vis Alsatians, which grew into a national scandal.²² However, school politics itself did not contribute to escalating the national conflict, particularly because nationalism and religion were not so intertwined as to strengthen oppositional nationalism as in Prussian Poland, and because the anti-Catholicism of the French Third Republic weakened France's attractiveness among local Catholics, who accounted for three-quarters of the population of Alsace-Lorraine.

Reports to the Colonial Government of Korea

Although the school doors in both border regions remained closed to the two Japanese scholars, Sakaguchi and Hoshina were able to gather some information based on print material, partially supported by their private networks.²³ They often used the same published sources for their reports, and their accounts coincided in many aspects. However, they also showed some differences that reflected their specific areas of expertise—Sakaguchi as a historian and Hoshina as a linguist.

Sakaguchi's report, *Doitsu Teikoku kyōkai chihō no kyōiku jōkyō* (The condition of education in the borderlands of Imperial Germany), was concerned with both Polish-speaking regions of Prussia and Alsace-Lorraine (Sakaguchi 1913). Hoshina wrote two reports, *Pōzen shū kokugo kyōiku ni kansuru chōsa hōkoku* (Report on national language education in Poznan province; Hoshina 1913a) and *Eruzasu-Rōtoringen shū kokugo kyōiku ni kansuru chōsa hōkoku* (Report on national language education in Alsace-Lorraine; Hoshina 1913b). The three accounts were submitted to the colonial government of Korea in 1913.²⁴

In these reports, both scholars took the view that national integration was more difficult in the East than in the West. Hoshina emphasized that the best policy of integration in the new territories would be a conciliatory approach to make the new

²² On this incident, see Schoenbaum (1982).

²³ Albrecht provided Sakaguchi with some statistical materials even though he rejected his request to visit schools (Sakaguchi 1931, 231). Sakaguchi also had an informant who was a teacher at an industry school in Strasbourg (Sakaguchi 1923, 359–360).

²⁴ The label "Secret" was stamped on the cover of each of these reports, indicating that the government intended to limit them to internal circulation. However, because parts of the findings were soon published by the authors, particularly Hoshina, their secrecy should not be overestimated (Hoshina 1914).

rulers more acceptable, in addition to an active language policy of assimilation. He regarded Prussian policy toward the Poles as flawed due to its settlement policy rather than its language policy and considered it “very appropriate” that the Polish language was no longer being used in schools. This principle, he thought, should be applied to Korea, too, “although teaching Korean could be allowed to a certain extent during this transitional time” (Hoshina 1913a, 34). Sakaguchi was more pessimistic about the future of national integration of the Polish people in Imperial Germany, pointing out that Polish nationalism had already been widely developed at the time of Bismarck’s assimilation politics, which also contributed to making the link between Polish nationalism and the Catholic church even stronger. He also mentioned the transimperial network of Polish nationalism and the liberal atmosphere of the Austrian territory in terms of ethnic aspects as a new phenomenon (Sakaguchi 1913, 98–99). He did not distinguish a good school policy from a bad settlement policy in this context.

Both scholars saw the future of Alsace-Lorraine as being much more positive due to its historical and cultural background: Alsace-Lorraine had never been an independent state and was predominantly German-speaking. This background was also reflected in the language policy. As a linguist, Hoshina extensively described the bilingual education in French-speaking areas, particularly the effectiveness of pedagogical methods for German-language learning.²⁵ Although he favored the exclusive use of the state language in education, he was interested in language education based on the new didactic approach of intuition as practiced in Alsace-Lorraine, which facilitated foreign-language learning and thus could serve as an example for teaching Japanese conversation to Korean students. As a first step, Hoshina recommended reforming teachers’ training in this direction (Hoshina 1913b, 50–51). He further pointed out that the teaching of German was particularly cultivated in high schools for girls in Alsace-Lorraine, supposedly because the local administration had learned its lessons from the experiences in Poznan, where Polish women formed the core of Polish nationalism. In this regard, Sakaguchi stressed that bourgeois women in Alsace-Lorraine culturally were much more oriented toward France, and that the majority were married to French rather than German men (Sakaguchi 1913, 163–164). Whereas Hoshina did not even mention higher education, Sakaguchi stressed the ambiguous influence of the University of Strasbourg, founded as a “German University” in 1872, in terms of national integration (Sakaguchi 1913, 171–172).²⁶

²⁵ Hoshina argued elsewhere that, in comparison to German, Japanese as a national language was much less systematically standardized, which made teaching more difficult (Hoshina 1914, 182–186). However, this difference did not prevent him from referring to language education in the German borderlands, insofar as the didactics of intuition (and local material for it) as well as the “direct method” of language teaching proved to be as effective in colonies as in the metropole (Yi 1996, 279).

²⁶ On the German University of Strasbourg, see Craig (1984). Sakaguchi also mentioned in passing the Royal Academy of Poznan, founded in 1903, which had the same political mission with a lower academic profile. See Schutte (2008).

Both Hoshina and Sakaguchi placed great importance on the subject of *Heimatkunde* (local history and geography). Whereas schoolbooks used in Poznan included stories that glorified the achievements of the Prussian monarchy throughout the region, those used in Alsace-Lorraine focused on the cultural history of the region, which could also have been interpreted as an integral part of German national history (Hoshina 1913b, 42–43; Hoshina 1914, 429–446; Sakaguchi 1913, 65–76, 127–132).²⁷ Hoshina posed the question of which approach would be more suitable for schools in Korea and swiftly answered:

In Korea, according to the guidelines of Poznan province, we should explain the long relations between Japan and Korea as well as the suffering of the Korean people from the oppression of China and their own tyrannical dynasties. It should be explained in further detail that the colonial government introduced a conciliatory policy after annexation, cherishes the rights of the people, and has brought about civilization. All of this is thanks to the highest considerations of his Majesty the Emperor. (Hoshina 1913b, 47–48)

As these examples show, Hoshina often reflected upon the extent to which German policies in the border regions were adaptable to Japanese colonial policies, whereas Sakaguchi did not pursue this line of thought. On the one hand, Sakaguchi might have felt committed to historicism—to reveal the past “as it really was”—as a historian. On the other hand, understanding the task of writing the report on school policy in a broader sense, he took into account various aspects that influenced national integration, including compulsory military service, the Catholic church, and tourism. He also described in detail the aforementioned debate on the dual character of Alsace-Lorraine’s regional identity around the turn of the century.²⁸ Sakaguchi emphasized that “the fact that the haute bourgeoisie in Alsace-Lorraine mostly spoke French did not mean that it opposed German culture entirely. In reality, there are Francophile people who cannot speak French and German-minded people who like to speak French” (1913, 195). This prosaic remark is particularly striking because Hoshina, a Japanese linguist, equated language with national consciousness. At the same time, he uncritically adopted pejorative stereotypes of the Poles (he described the “Polnische Wirtschaft” [Polish economy] as “complete disorder and dirt”) and Catholic clericals (whom he claimed made people unenlightened for their own sake) (Sakaguchi 1913, 95, 161).

²⁷ By comparing Poznanian and West Prussian with Upper Silesian school textbooks, Hoshina explained the weak presence of the Prussian monarchy in Upper Silesia with the underdeveloped ethnic conflict in this region (Hoshina 1914, 314–316). Recent studies on Upper Silesia stress the “national indifference” in this borderland. See, for example, Bjork (2008).

²⁸ This was probably the reason that the governor of Alsace-Lorraine referred to Sakaguchi’s project as “journalistic” rather than “scholarly” (BAB Berlin, R901-38493, Governor of Alsace-Lorraine to Reich Chancellor [the Foreign Office], July 19, 1911).

These stereotypes were popular in the predominantly Protestant world of German academics and public opinion.

Between Extension of the Metropole and Distant Colony: Taiwan

Borderlands as Extensions of the Metropole

As Japan gained the island of Taiwan as its first colony after signing the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, the concept of Taiwan's administrative structure was based on European examples. In 1896, the undersecretary of state of the Foreign Office, Hara Takashi, considered turning the new colony into an extension of the Japanese metropole, modeled on the examples of the relationship between Alsace-Lorraine and Germany as well as that between Algeria and France. By contrast Gotō Shinpei held the view that, racially, the Taiwanese were highly dissimilar from the Japanese in the metropole and that for this reason the island of Taiwan had to have a different administrative structure (Komagome 1996, 32–33; Oguma 1999, 83–88). In 1898, Gotō was appointed head of the civil administration of the colonial government of Taiwan and, as a result, the “laissez-faire” assimilation policy prevailed.

However, the Taiwanese government's interest in the German borderlands did not disappear immediately. Indeed, in 1899 Sakatani Yoshirō, a member of Taiwan Association, proposed to establish a Japanese university in Taiwan, referring to the University of Strasbourg, although it was not met with approval in government circles (Lee 2006, 47). Moreover, the first recorded Japanese delegation to Alsace-Lorraine was represented by a civil servant of the Taiwanese colonial government who visited schools and state institutions, such as courts of justice, prisons, and city administration in 1900.²⁹ Thirty years later, this official, Ishizuka Eizō, became the governor of Taiwan. However, after this visit, no other delegation related to the colonial government in Taiwan was sent to Alsace-Lorraine.³⁰

Turning to Distant Colonies

The government of Taiwan continuously shifted its attention between the borderlands and overseas colonies, rather than completely losing interest. For example, in 1905, Gotō wrote that during the previous twenty years the German colonial administration had made rapid development based on the analysis of other colonial powers by German authorities, and the colonial government of Taiwan found this approach so inspiring that it had also published some books on the German colonial system (Gotō 1905, 1–2). Tōgō

²⁹ ADBR, 105AL1551, State Secretary of Alsace-Lorraine to the *Oberschulrat*, February 26, 1900.

³⁰ In the documents of ADBR (105AL1550-1), which cover the whole German period before the outbreak of the First World War (1871–1914), two further Japanese delegations were registered, but unlike Sakaguchi and Hoshina they did not intend to study the specific situation in Alsace-Lorraine.

Minoru (1881–1959), the author of a report on the internal colonization in Prussian Poland in 1911, declared the Germanization policy—composed of cultural assimilation and settlement policy—a failure (Tōgō 1911, 369). He stressed that the assimilation policy itself would inevitably create dissatisfaction among the colonized people, which constituted a potential risk to colonial rule. In opposition to Hoshina, he used this argument to criticize the ongoing education policy in Taiwan, which was shifting from a non-assimilationist to an assimilationist approach (see Mizutani 2014).

In addition to the government of Taiwan, German colonial education began to attract the attention of colonial experts. For example, one of Japan’s representative scholars of colonial education, Shidehara Wataru, wrote a comprehensive book on school policy in European and American colonies in 1912, supported by the colonial government. Although this publication did not include a chapter on German colonial schools, the introduction pointed out that the topic most fiercely discussed in Reichstag debates on German colonies in that year was school policy (Shidehara 1912, 2). Particularly striking in this context was an inquiry from the Japanese colonial government that was conveyed by the Japanese embassy via the German Foreign Office to the German Colonial Office. According to the verbal note of the Japanese embassy, the colonial government

has expressed a keen desire to receive two copies of tests by male school students, each graded as outstanding, average, or inadequate, in addition to two of the same by female students from Germany and the German Protectorates, namely, for each of the subjects essay writing, spelling, drawing, handicrafts (needlework for girls), each from an elementary school [*Volksschule*], an academic high school [*Gymnasium*], an academic high school with a focus on modern languages and natural sciences [*Realgymnasium*], an academic high school with a focus on math and natural sciences [*Oberrealschule*], an academic high school for girls [*höhere Mädchenschule*], a teachers’ college [*Lehrerseminar*], a female teachers’ college [*Lehrerinnenseminar*], a training school affiliated with the latter, a technical school, and an adult school; each of these stating the name, age, and sex of the student.³¹

Civil servants of the Colonial Office discussed whether or not to meet this request. None of the departments of the individual colonial territories raised concern,³² other

³¹ PAAA, R62924, Verbal Note of the Japanese Embassy to the German Foreign Office, May 14, 1914.

³² Kiautschou, the German concession in China from 1898, was not included in this discussion. According to available sources, the first substantial mention of German education policy in Kiautschou is Yamamoto (1914, 32–39), based on his tour in 1913. He evaluated it positively, particularly the German-Chinese University in Qingdao, founded in 1909, which unleashed “the open-ended cultural process” (Steinmetz 2007, 489). Although it is reminiscent of German

than the department for German East Africa, which concluded, “There are no concerns regarding the request by the colonial government of Dar es Salaam for the required material if the Foreign Office deems it desirable to accommodate the Imperial Japanese government for political reasons. However, in my view the Swahili student books—and these are the only possible ones for German East Africa—are rather irrelevant [for Taiwan].”³³

A decree to this effect was submitted by the Colonial Office to all governors of German protectorates from Southwest Africa to the South Sea, but not until late June 1914. Because the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo at that time, the required material was never sent. We can therefore only speculate as to what inspirations, if any, the colonial government drew from the diverse educational policies of the German colonial governments. Nonetheless, this inquiry shows the government’s will to analyze the material in its own right, not just through publications in German.³⁴ This strong motivation could be explained by a similar situation between Taiwan and the German colonies: whereas Germany brutally suppressed the resistance of the Herero in Southwest Africa and the Maji-Maji in East Africa in the mid-1900s, the colonial government of Taiwan, from 1909 onward, pursued a policy of conquest against aboriginal tribes in the mountain areas who had hitherto not been targeted by Japanese assimilation policy, aside from the local “Taiwanese Chinese”-speaking population in the plains (Mochiji 1912, 279–320).³⁵

Indeed, the government in Taiwan began to produce the first reading textbooks for aboriginal children in October 1914 (Kitamura 2008, 114–119). However, the objective of this project was not to assimilate aboriginal children as members of the Japanese nation, but to turn them into loyal and disciplined subjects with basic communicative skills in Japanese. This hierarchy of ethnic groups in Taiwanese society might be one reason why it was often assumed that assimilation in Korea would be much easier than in Taiwan (Ching 2001, 101), and why the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan became more interested in overseas colonies than in the borderlands.

cultural policy through education in Latin America, as Penny H. Glenn (2017, 529–531) states, it did not seem to impress the Japanese military government, which occupied Kiautschou in late 1914 and closed the college without replacing it with an equivalent Japanese-Chinese institution.

³³ BAB, R1001-7315, Annotation of the German East Africa department, June 6, 1914. For language education in German colonies in Africa, see Krause (2007); for German East Africa, see Owzar (2010).

³⁴ The results of a 1911 census on education in German colonies were published in 1914 (Schlunk 1914a, 1914b).

³⁵ Like Tōgō, Mochiji Rokusaburō, the former head of school administration in Taiwan, expressed his skepticism about assimilation policy by quoting the French colonial scholar Joseph Chailley-Bert, who used the example of education policy in British India to revise the assimilationist policy of the French Empire. See also Mizutani (2014).

After 1918: From the Current Model to the Historical Lesson

School Politics in Prussian Poland as Historical Failure

With its military defeat in November 1918 and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, Germany lost all of its colonies as well as a substantial part of its border territories. From then on, it no longer served as a working role model for Japan. However, Germany remained relevant as a point of reference for Japanese colonial policy, as shown by a two-volume compendium on Prussia's policy toward the Poles that was published by the Research Office of the colonial government of Korea in 1924. The beginning of the book reads as follows:

Despite a difference in density, the relations between Poles and Prussians are similar to those between Koreans and the Japanese metropolises. However, it must be noted that Japanese-Korean relations are closer and more peaceful. Some of these similarities are (1) a long-standing tradition of the relations between both peoples since antiquity; (2) both the ruling and the ruled peoples are civilized; (3) at the time of the annexation, the ruling people was socially and culturally superior to the ruled people; (4) racial differences between both peoples are less profound than between those of other colonial powers and their territories; (5) linguistic differences are of similar extent as racial differences....In linguistic-genealogical terms, Japanese and Korean are closer related, but in practical-folkloric terms, relations between German and Polish are almost the same; (6) there are hardly any substantial differences in customs and practices; (7) with regard to religion, there are also no profound differences. It is fair to assume a greater diversity between Poles and Prussians in this respect because religion has always played a much greater role in the history of European peoples; (8) political rule was the result of annexation rather than military conquest; (9) the new territory is an outpost of national defense; (10) because the territory borders the metropole, it has been considered a part of it rather than a colony; (11) accordingly, the structure of political rule is not colonial. Rather, efforts have been made to improve the material and cultural prosperity of the protectorates in question by generous investments. (Chōsen Sōtoku Fu 1924, 1:1–2)

In 1910, Ukita Kazutami, editor of the magazine *Taiyō* (Sun), argued that racial and cultural differences prevented Poles as well as Alsations and Lorrainians from assimilating with Germans, whereas there were few problems between Japan and Korea, similar to England and Scotland (Caprio 2009, 82). Contrary to this prevailing view in Japanese public opinion at the time of annexation, the compendium's list of similarities

reveals more ambiguity. On the one hand, points 10 and 11 emphasize that Japan, unlike the European colonial powers, treated its colonies as part of the metropole, though they were not represented in the national parliament. On the other hand, the closeness between the colonizer and the colonized stressed in points 2, 4, 6, and 7 had to be counter-balanced by the distinctive superiority of the colonizer—point 3—if colonial rule were to be further legitimized. In this precarious balancing act, learning a lesson from the similarities of the German case and its failures was by no means less important than emulating it as a role model or reference point.

Three years earlier, in 1921, the government in Korea had published *Doitsu zokuryō jidai no Pōrando ni okeru kokugo seisaku* (Language policy in Poland under German rule) by Hoshina Kōichi. Here, the author focused his criticism on language policy itself, which he considered inconsistent, alternating between harshness and appeasement. In his view, this inconsistency would only propel the resistance and even revindication of the colonized people. In a prevention effort, he recommended a “slow and steady” policy (Hoshina 1921, 9; Yi 1996, 250–255). By 1945, Hoshina had tirelessly repeated his opinion in his various writings, in which he continued to refer to Prussian Poland, together with the multiethnic Hapsburg Empire, as historical examples of political failures.

In the Prussian case, Hoshina saw a parallel to Korea’s situation after the First World War and the rise of the anti-Japanese independence movement in Korea in 1919. The shock this movement gave the Japanese government resulted in a revision of colonial education policy in 1922, an important part of the overall transition from militarist to “cultural” and more liberal colonial rule. In reality, the new education edict was a compromise between the central government in Tokyo, which insisted on assimilation, and the colonial government, which had to deal with Korean nationalism and Japanese settlers.³⁶ In this context, a rudimentary course in the Korean language was approved in elementary schools with only Korean children. This approach can be considered as a middle course between those of Prussian Poland and French-speaking territories of Alsace-Lorraine. The same may be true of the introduction of Korean history as a colonial *Heimatkunde* at this time: on the one hand, as Hoshina proposed, the government clearly aimed to include Korean history in Japanese national history under the impartial rule of the emperor; on the other hand, it also contained the cultural history of Korea showing the country’s certain distinctiveness (Kokubu 2010). The double-sided character of the *Heimatkunde* in Japanese colonies suggests the influence of both Prussian Poland and Alsace-Lorraine.

However, as Yi Yoeun-suk admits, it is difficult for anyone to find direct links to the implementation of school policy (1996, 291). One of the few exceptions was Oda Seigo, a school administration official in Korea, who, alluding to Hoshina’s concern, praised Japanese colonial education, which promoted the spontaneous learning of Japanese by Koreans, in contrast to Prussians, who forced Poles to learn German by coercion (Kubota

³⁶ On the nationalism of Japanese settlers in Korea with interpretations of Korean history by their pundits, see Uchida (2011, 191–208).

2005, 290–291). This emphasis on the superiority of Japanese assimilation, rather than on learning, increasingly dominated discourses from the 1930s to 1945.

Rediscovery of Alsace-Lorraine

Whereas Prussian Poland continued to attract attention among Japanese colonial experts, Alsace-Lorraine almost disappeared from official colonial discourses.³⁷ However, the language problem of this borderland with its German-speaking majority became more acute after its 1918–1919 return to the French *mère patrie* (motherland), which never accepted it as a “national minority” in the “one and indivisible republic.”³⁸ It is perhaps no coincidence that the French writer Alphonse Daudet’s short story “La dernière classe” (The last French lesson, 1873) made its way into the reading textbooks of Japanese metropole schools precisely during this period, in 1927. It tells the touching story of the last French lesson in Alsace by a teacher who would leave the next day for France, because teaching French had been prohibited by the Germans. Decontextualized from the German period as a whole, this short story became a popular piece of school reading to foster the love for national language in Japanese children for many decades.³⁹

Some references to Alsace-Lorraine can also be found in the colonial context, for example, in the discourse of Taiwanese intellectual Lin Mosei (also known as Lim Boseng, 1887–1947). The first Taiwanese graduate of Tokyo Imperial University, he obtained a teaching post at a public secondary school in his homeland while serving as a vice-principal at his old school, Tainan Presbyterian Middle School. As such, he was, to a certain degree, for an indigenous Taiwanese, one of the few who was able to climb up the very narrow social ladder and thus did not completely deny the modern character of Japanese education. However, he became increasingly dissatisfied with Japanese colonial education policy and went to New York for higher education. In 1929, he submitted to Columbia University a PhD dissertation titled “Public Education in Formosa

³⁷ Sakaguchi traveled again in Europe in 1922. His travel report included an essay titled “Aruzasu no aki” (Autumn in Alsace), in which he described the changing situation in Strasbourg and Alsace under French rule and wrote about the “tragedy” of the borderland between France and Germany (Sakaguchi 1923, 356–367).

³⁸ This is all the more striking as Ando Masatsugu, a school official in Taiwan, wrote reports on actual bilingualism in Ireland, Belgium, and even Luxemburg based on his study in Europe during the late 1920s (Yasuda 2000, 101–120). Moreover, although Hoshina occasionally mentioned Alsace-Lorraine, his writing became imprecise. In 1942, for example, he wrote, “In Poland as well as Alsace-Lorraine, the education was given only in German. Using other national languages in the public sphere was strictly prohibited” (Hoshina 1942, 22). In fact, French was taught in primary schools in the francophone areas of Alsace-Lorraine.

³⁹ In the 1980s, this story was banned from Japanese school textbooks, due in part to the influential book of the linguist Tanaka Katsuhiko. Tanaka pointed out the linguistic situation in Alsace, which contradicted the story’s equating French with the mother tongue of the population (1981, 125–126).

under the Japanese Administration.” In his introduction, Lin wrote, “Perhaps the nearest approach [for Taiwan] would be the state of affairs in Alsace-Lorraine where the French and the Germans have had about the same kind and degree of culture and lived side by side with changes of administration during the course of time” (Lin 1929, 5).⁴⁰ With this sentence, Lin argued that Taiwan was not culturally inferior to Japan but was built on the two traditional neighboring cultures, China and Japan. Lin considered Taiwan, like Alsace-Lorraine, as a space “in-between” with its own distinct culture. However, he criticized Japanese educational policy for discriminating against the local Taiwanese-speaking Chinese majority by limiting their elementary and secondary education and ignoring the local language and culture in school curriculums. In his view Alsace-Lorraine, which the Japanese government once considered an example of the extension of the metropole, served the colonized Taiwanese as a foil to legitimize their country’s dual culture. However, Lin’s reference was not based on a concrete comparison of the respective school policies.⁴¹

Conclusion

In November 1921, the German ambassador to Japan, Wilhelm Solf, embarked upon an “information tour” in Korea. Although he is considered one of the most important pioneers in the reestablishment of German-Japanese friendship after the First World War, not much attention has been paid to the fact that Japanese colonial experts were interested in his colonial career and policy.⁴² In 1900, Solf became the first governor of German Samoa and, from 1911 to 1918, he served as secretary of state of the Imperial Colonial Office. Moreover, Japan obtained parts of the former German New Guinea under the South Pacific Mandate. High-ranking officials of the colonial government of Korea were well aware of Solf’s career and organized a dinner party for him. In his report, he wrote, “Since I am a famous colonial expert, our conversation revolved around academic discussions of every colonial issue.... After the main dinner they showed me my book on colonial questions and then we discussed the treatment of indigenous people in colonies.”⁴³

At the same time, Solf confirmed the overall dissatisfaction of the colonized Koreans, despite the liberalized colonial policy of the government. He was skeptical as

⁴⁰ For an in-depth analysis of Lin’s dissertation, see Komagome (2015, 358–384).

⁴¹ The sole work on Alsace-Lorraine listed in the bibliography of Lin’s dissertation was Charles Downer Haze’s 1917 political history from an anti-German perspective: *Alsace-Lorraine under German Rule*.

⁴² On Solf, see Hemenstall and Mochida (2005).

⁴³ PAAA, R85977, Travel Report of the Ambassador Solf to Tokyo to the Foreign Office in Berlin, December 2, 1921. The book mentioned here is *Kolonialpolitik: Mein politisches Vermächtnis* (Colonial policy: My political legacy; Solf 1919). Translated into Japanese by both the Japanese Colonial Bureau in 1922 and a young Japanese colonial scholar in 1926, Solf’s book found a certain resonance among anti-assimilationist Japanese colonial scholars.

to whether this liberal policy would have a positive impact. He particularly criticized the impatient and intolerant “police economy” of Japanese rule, relying on the deployment of spies and informants, which, he argued, resulted from the Japanese “national character rooted in feudal age.” Combined with this, “the arrogance of the ruler and the haughty of the nation with strong pride will be a constant source of failures.”⁴⁴

Solf’s complaint about the strict escort by the Japanese police on his tour reminds us of Sakaguchi and the similar proposition of the Prussian Ministry of Educational and Cultural Affairs that ultimately remained unrealized. But on one occasion, Solf was able to escape police control and interview some Koreans. Solf and Sakaguchi shared a pessimistic view on the future of the respective colonial rule. Both examples show the limit of politically influencing the transfer of colonial knowledge.

Imperial Germany as a relatively new colonial power provoked the interest of Japanese colonial authorities. However, they were not always or primarily interested in overseas colonies but in the borderlands of the German nation-state, particularly in the case of the government of Korea. In Taiwan, the colonial gaze rather moved between both territories. The fact that both colonial governments included not only Prussian Poland but also Alsace-Lorraine reflects, at least regarding school and language politics, Japanese colonial rule shifting between an imperializing nation-state and a nationalizing empire.

In the wake of the First World War, Germany lost its status as a reference point for Japan. It came to serve, however, first as a historical lesson, showing failures that were to be avoided, and then increasingly as a negative foil by which Japanese colonial officials could express pride in their own administration. This dual functioning characterized Prussian Poland in particular. Alsace-Lorraine, officially almost neglected in the interwar years, was “rediscovered” in the metropole and by the colonized in Taiwan. Taking Germany with its borderlands and colonies into consideration contributes to a better understanding of the selective learning by, and self-perception of, Japanese colonialism beyond the formal end of the German Empire. This Japanese perspective also helps to relativize the nation-empire divide, beyond which national and colonial (trans)formation took place in intertwined ways.

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⁴⁴ PAAA, R85977, Travel Report of the Ambassador Solf to Tokyo to the Foreign Office in Berlin, December 2, 1921.

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