

Yuehtsen Juliette Chung, *Struggle for National Survival: Eugenics in Sino-Japanese Contexts, 1896-1945*. New York, London: Routledge, 2002, xii, 193 pp.

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This book compares and analyzes ideas and movements related to eugenics in China and Japan in the turbulent half-century leading up to 1945. In her study, Yuehtsen Juliette Chung (National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan) emphasizes that the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) marked "a turning point" in the power dynamics between the two countries. Japan, which for centuries had borrowed many ideas and institutions from the great Chinese civilization, defeated China, which was struggling to modernize its industry and military, and became the object of emulation for the younger generation of Chinese intellectuals, including eugenicists. Since then, for its own survival and prosperity, Japan embarked on its quest for colonial expansion in East Asia in order to compete with the imperialist West. Japan's colonial project forced China to engage in campaigns to resist incorporation into the Japanese empire. Their conflict culminated in the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). By situating the circulation of eugenics knowledge in the inseparable history of the two countries' modern experiences, the author aims at complicating the simple mono-directional transfer of ideas from the West to Asia in typical national history narratives. Methodologically, the author defines her version of "comparativism", that is, an "approach to simultaneity which encompasses plural nonsynchronic consciousnesses and temporalities, in addition to the conventional use of comparativism as juxtaposition to locate parallels of similarity and difference" (p. 7). She employs this term "in order to locate intersubjectivity in both representations and reality, and better understand the conflictual development of Asian experiences of eugenics in particular and modernization in general" (pp. 7-8). The ambitious conceptual framework is a critique of existing studies, which

tend to reduce their examinations to such dichotomies as East versus West, representation versus reality, self versus other, etc. (p. 8).

Chung presents three major thematic chapters after a short introduction and Chapter One. Chapter Two provides background information covering American and Nazi connections to the eugenics movement and the formation of scientific communities in Japan and China. Chapter Three, entitled "Lamarckism versus Mendelism: The Politics of Body and Heredity Symptoms: National Character and the Eugenicians' Presentation," explores the debates among Chinese scholars, including American-trained zoologist/eugenicist Pan Guangdang (1899-1967), Japanese-trained socialist eugenicist Zhou Jianren (1888-1984), and American-trained sociologist Sun Benwen (1892-1979) in the mid 1920s. This chapter also examines Japanese legislative efforts to segregate and control lepers, the sufferers of non-hereditary disease, in the name of eugenics, together with arguments that were compatible with Lamarckism in the popular writings of the German-inspired journalist Ikeda Shigenori (1892-1966) and Japan's leading eugenicist Nagai Hisomu (1876-1957). The author argues that Lamarckian ideas, in which acquired characteristics were considered heritable, did play a substantial role in the eugenics movements in Japan and China (p. 62). Unlike biologically deterministic Mendelism, Lamarckism offered a possibility of racial improvement through social reform and education even for the races deemed "inferior" in the eyes of Western Social Darwinists.

Chapter Four, "Birth Control or Sex Control?: Politics of Knowledge and Reproduction" illuminates the entry of women as a subject in the eugenics debates around the time Margaret Sanger visited both Japan and China in 1922 as women began to be perceived as the preservers of the nation and race based on their role in reproducing and educating children. On the "performative" level, Chung compares two female gynaecologists: Yoshioka Yayoi (1871-1959), who founded a Japanese college for women doctors, and Marion Yang (1891-1983), who was instrumental in creating a program for training modern midwives. Interestingly, Chung finds the marked contrast that while Yoshioka was opposed to it, Yang was supportive of birth control.

Chapter Five highlights the differing social constructions of race/ethnicity in the second Sino-Japanese War, which was understood as a war of population by Japanese and Chinese eugenicists. Chung shows the Japanese dilemma of pushing the identity of Japan as a racial body of the pure-blooded *Yamato minzoku* while managing a multi-ethnic Japanese empire. Examining the 1941 Ministry of Health and Welfare document, the "Outlines of Establishment of Population Policy," together

with the Ministry's key eugenicist Furuya<sup>1</sup> Yoshio's (1890-1974) book entitled *National Land, Population and Blood*, Chung finds the Japanese vision of "a three-dimensional conical body in which the top center and core circle would be the emperor and his lineage, the inner circle the *Yamato* race as a unilinear patriarchal nation, and the outer circle pan-Asianism culturally and territorially binding together the Japanese colonies and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" (p. 151). Chung also points out a hierarchical emphasis: while in the metropolis both quality and quantity were stressed, in the overseas colonies the quality approach was conspicuously missing. Regarding China, Chung summarizes various discussions relating to population, including that of the Population Policy Research Committee in the Social Ministry in the Executive Yuan in the early 1940s. In May 1945, the Nationalist Party adopted the plan drafted by this Committee as the Guideline of National Population Policy. It incorporated eugenic principles. To improve population quality, it listed such things as premarital examination, venereal-disease prevention, and the separation or sterilization of hereditarily defective people. To ensure population growth, the policy prohibited abortion and infanticide, and promoted 'reforms' at frontier areas. Contrary to the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare preference for 'pure-blooded' ethnic identity, Chinese officials encouraged interracial and inter-ethnic marriage in order to strengthen national unity and support future conscription.

These three substantial chapters are followed by a brief Conclusion and a slightly longer Epilogue. The conclusion stresses the disparity between the good intentions and evil consequences of science in eugenic movements.

The scope of this study is impressive in its originality, depth and scope. The author is comfortable doing research in not only her native Chinese but also in English and Japanese. This linguistic competence has made it possible to produce a ground-breaking study comparing similar and inter-related issues in the two countries while situating the subject in a global context. The Chinese and Japanese adopted eugenic ideas that originated from Britain, Germany and the United States. East Asian advocates of eugenics shared certain translated terminology, reinterpreted the ideas to fit or reject their local traditions and responded to changing historical conditions. Chung is particularly successful in shedding light on their shared concerns, and such mediators of transnational eugenics as Chinese graduate of Tokyo University Zhou Jianren and Japanese physiologist Nagai Hisomu, who taught in Taiwan and China after his retirement. Chapter Five which deals with the two countries'

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<sup>1</sup> Actually his last name is pronounced "Koya," not "Furuya."

intensified discussions of population policy, in which eugenics figured prominently, in the midst of the same war in which Japan was trying to take over China, offers a new cultural way of looking at Sino-Japanese relations dominated by political, military, and economic historical approaches.

The study's originality and scope create some challenges as well. Concerning her ambitious conceptual approach, although the author explains her "comparativism," she does not offer adequate definitions for other theoretical jargon, such as "simultaneity," "nonsynchronism," "temporalities," "intersubjectivity," and the "performative," which, I believe, are essential for readers to appreciate fully the intellectual contributions of the book. In terms of the wide range of coverage, there is a problem of the target readership. This book may be difficult to follow for East Asianists who are unfamiliar with the history of science related to eugenics. For example, inspired by Nancy L. Stepan, Chung defines Lamarckism by locating it in the French/Latin American traditions of improving offspring through better prenatal and infant care, and public hygiene campaigns against alcoholism, tuberculosis and venereal disease. In fact, this was often observable even in the Anglo-American eugenics movements. Indeed, historian Daniel Kevles calls the advocates of such movements, "reform eugenicists" as opposed to "mainline eugenicists." Though Chung does not discuss the relationships between reform eugenics and mainline eugenics, it seems compatible with that of Chung's Lamarckism and Mendelism.<sup>2</sup> Additional explanations of differences and similarities among Latin Lamarckism and Anglo-American reform eugenics would have been helpful in better-situating, for instance, Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), the American birth control activist who visited Japan and China in 1922, and her impact on East Asian eugenic thinking in Chung's study. Likewise, this study assumes prior knowledge in East Asian history. In Chapter Five, Chung discusses the population policies of Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), Chiang Kai-shek (1877-1975) and Mao Zedong (1893-1976), together with the ideas of various population theorists. I wonder if non-China specialists interested in global eugenics movements can differentiate their ideological, political, and diplomatic contexts and different degrees of influences. This book would have benefitted from expanding the introduction and conclusion to offer definitions of the conceptual terms to support the author's theoretical framework and meaningful analyses

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<sup>2</sup> See Chung, p. 98; Nancy L. Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), and Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 173-175.

tightly linked to that framework. It would also have been desirable to expand Chapter Two in order to provide further historical and scientific background instead of burying the information in the subsequent narrative. A glossary of terms and individuals as well as a chronological table would have been helpful to cater to the needs of the book's audience, who come from disparate disciplines.

I find another challenge in the author's grand scheme. As the introduction makes clear, this book is based on her dissertation, "Struggle for National Survival: Chinese Eugenics in a Transnational Context, 1896-1945" (University of Chicago, 1999). The title change seems to suggest the author's intention to make the book less Sino-centered than the original. However, I feel her book is still anchored in Chinese history. First, I find Yoshioka Yayoi to be insignificant in the history of eugenics movements in Japan, even though Marion Yang and Yoshioka make a good comparison as pioneer female gynaecologists, and a good contrast regarding their attitudes toward birth control. As acknowledged by Chung, Yoshioka was listed as a member of the Racial Hygiene Association in the 1930s (p. 120), but beyond that token membership, she was never an active advocate of eugenic ideas. That may be why Chung ends up discussing Yoshioka's motive to become a doctor and her opposition to birth control without providing crucial information about her eugenic ideas. In Japan, many women, including birth-control activists, were more intensely involved in eugenics activism. There could have been a better pairing than Yang and Yoshioka if the purpose of the book is to examine eugenic ideas. The second example of Chung's Sino-centeredness is her conspicuous omission of discussion of the Japanese National Eugenics Law, which was passed in 1940, in her chapter on wartime eugenics population policy discourse. At the very center of population policy-making in wartime Japan, there stood this law, which deserves more substantial discussion than a few mere mentions on pp. 139, 144 and 162. (The author's calling of this law the "National Eugenics Bill" even after the 1940 enactment is puzzling. See p. 139, 162, 173.) In addition, there is also an issue of thematic compartmentalization. After reading her rich examples of Lamarckian and Mendelian interpretations of heredity in various eugenics theorists in Chapter Three, some readers will be eager to find Chung's follow-up observations linking the two evolutionary views to the pure-blooded and miscegenation eugenics arguments during the Second Sino-Japanese War in Chapter Five. Nancy Stepan's Lamarckian eugenics had much to do with the Brazilian anxiety about "mongrel" races perceived of as inferior to white pure-blooded races.<sup>3</sup> Having illustrated a neat con-

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<sup>3</sup> Stepan, pp. 162-170.

trast in each chapter, sometimes Chung seems reluctant to bridge related issues between chapters. All in all, these examples illustrate some challenging aspects of comparativism. Finally, the conclusion seems somewhat detached from her earlier empirical discussion focusing on ideas and policies among intellectuals and policymakers, but not on the implementation of such ideas and policies *per se*. To illustrate the “evil” consequences of the well-intended “science”, however, Chung abruptly refers to Japanese “fascist atrocities” and eugenic racial exclusion (p. 171). In addition, the conclusion could have highlighted her arguments and contributions to scholarship, explaining the significance of her findings based on the concepts introduced in the introduction. For example, Chung’s Chapter Five is more nuanced than the general assumption linking Japanese acts of violence and eugenics, shedding light on Japanese eugenicists’ ambivalence toward inclusiveness and exclusiveness during the war. As Chung correctly observes, Japan had multiple and conflicting national identities: Japan was in, outside of and above Asia (p. 147).

In sum, this book is a pioneering study complicating East Asian eugenics history by going beyond conventional single-nation studies. Her novel trans-national approach is promising, especially in offering a new cultural way of investigating Sino-Japanese relations. It also poses various challenges in how to handle widely different readers, and how to manage the balance of comparativism and compartmentalization in thematic chapter organization.

The book’s epilogue lists the author’s future research agendas, including the fascinating topic of the postwar debates on Lysenkoism in China and Japan. I expect the author to further refine the important analytical framework developed in this book.