This work examines the creation of an East Asian cultural sphere by the Japanese imperial project in the first half of the twentieth century. It seeks to re-read the “Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere” not as a mere political and ideological concept but as the potential site of a vibrant and productive space that accommodated transcultural interaction and transformation. By reorienting the focus of (post)colonial studies from the macro-narrative of political economy, military institutions, and socio-political dynamics, it uncovers a cultural and personal understanding of life within the Japanese imperial enterprise.

To engage with empire on a personal level, one must ask: What made ordinary citizens participate in the colonial enterprise? What was the lure of empire? How did individuals not directly invested in the enterprise become engaged with the idea? Explanations offered heretofore emphasize the potency of the institutional or ideological apparatus. Faye Kleeman asserts, however, that desire and pleasure may be better barometers for measuring popular sentiment in the empire—what Raymond Williams refers to as the “structure of feeling” that accompanied modern Japan’s expansionism. This particular historical moment disseminated common cultural perceptions and values (whether voluntarily accepted or forcibly inculcated). Mediated by a shared aspiration for modernity, a connectedness fostered by new media, and a mobility that encouraged travel within the empire, an East Asian contact zone was shared by a generation and served as the proto-environment that presaged the cultural and media convergences currently taking place in twenty-first-century Northeast Asia.

The negative impact of Japanese imperialism on both nations and societies has been amply demonstrated and cannot be denied, but In Transit focuses on the opportunities and unique experiences it afforded a number of extraordinary individuals to provide a fuller picture of Japanese colonial culture. By observing the empire—from Tokyo to remote Mongolia and colonial Taiwan, from the turn of the twentieth century to the postwar era—through the diverse perspectives of gender, the arts, and popular culture, it explores an area of colonial experience that straddles the public and the private, the national and the personal, thereby revealing a new aspect of the colonial condition and its postcolonial implications.
With In Transit: The Formation of the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere, Faye Yuan Kleeman adopts an interdisciplinary and multi-textual approach for providing a transnational history of Japan’s “empire-wide cultural sphere” (9), and the multi-faceted ways in which individuals were embroiled within this sphere. By the onset of the Pacific War, this “cultural sphere” had become articulated within government propaganda as the geopolitical construct of the “Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” the paradigmatic expression of Japanese imperialist ideology. It is 2014. In Transit: The Formation of the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.


Liu, Xiancheng. Southeast Asian response to colonialism was both collaboration and nationalism in all its forms. Historical Background. Mark Twain was the most famous literary adversary of the Philippine-American War and he served as a vice president of the Anti-Imperialist League from 1901 until his death. The Philippines became a commonwealth in 1935 and independent in 1946 after World War II. The western colonial powers had economic, social, political, and cultural impact on the peoples and states of SEA. They brought about rapid changes in SEA.

EFFECTS. BEYOND IN EAST ASIAN CONTEXTS

Hyunjung Lee & Younghan Cho
Why is this happening to me?