

after the Fukushima nuclear disaster offers a fitting call for a different kind of media studies today. The articulately conceptualized editorial vision of this volume not only answers to this call, but the diverse range of rigorous and engaging essays make the collection as a whole essential reading for an extensive range of audiences in media studies, Japan studies, and humanities-based area studies more broadly.

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**CURSE ON THIS COUNTRY: The Rebellious Army of Imperial Japan.**  
By **Danny Orbach**. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2017. x, 367 pp.  
(Figures.) US\$39.95, cloth. ISBN 978-1-5017-0528-1.

Reading Danny Orbach's new monograph, I often thought of that old quip about Prussia: "not a state with an army but an army with a state." The same too could be said about Imperial Japan, where, as Orbach persuasively shows, the tail so often wagged the dog in setting both domestic and foreign policy.

Orbach's book pulls off the difficult trick of talking to two audiences at once. Those only casually familiar with Japanese history will appreciate how thoroughly Orbach demolishes the hoary orientalist trope that Japanese soldiers were insect-like drones, mindlessly obedient to state propaganda. Specialists will be more interested in Orbach's answer to what is still for many the great question of modern Japanese history: why *did* the country embark on a disastrous war of aggression in the mid-twentieth century?

Orbach's answer in some ways echoes earlier explanations advanced during and immediately after that war. At the time many Japanese intellectuals, not to mention the US Occupation authorities, agreed that the country's militarism was a remnant of the "feudal" Tokugawa era (1603–1868): an unreformed samurai ethos combined with a stunted modern subjectivity that prevented the people from mobilizing to curb the recklessness of their leaders. Later generations of scholars have largely jettisoned this view, attributing the Pacific War to modern phenomena such as capitalism, imperialism, fascism, or autarkic planning.

But for Orbach the seeds of the Japanese militarism do indeed lie in the Tokugawa period, in particular its closing years after the arrival of Commodore Perry's Black Ships. During this period rebellious young "warriors of high aspiration" (*shishi*) undermined the ruling Shogunate by engaging in assassination, brigandage, and even urban guerrilla warfare. Though their actions were purportedly patriotic—they aimed to restore the emperor, who would protect the nation from foreign incursion—Orbach doesn't shy away from calling them terrorists. Moreover the *shishi*, he argues, set a precedent for later generations of military men to meddle in Japanese politics, disobeying the chain of command in the name of a higher patriotism.

From here, Orbach traces the thread of military insubordination across the Meiji Restoration and through Japan's imperial expansion up to the 1937 invasion of China. In the process he covers well-known incidents like the 1873 debate over whether to invade Korea, the 1877 Satsuma Rebellion, and the machinations to assassinate leaders in Korea (Queen Min, 1895) and Northeast China (Zhang Zuolin, 1928) as a prelude to eventual annexation.

He also shows how military officers interfered in domestic politics as well, not just in two coup attempts during the 1930s, but also during the Taishō political crisis of 1912–1913, when the Army Ministry toppled a cabinet in order to secure budget appropriations for itself. This, Orbach argues, “amounted almost to a bloodless *coup d'état*” (130). It not only cemented the army's “independence from civilian rule,” but triggered a “dangerous democratization of military disobedience” (130). From this point on, not only generals but also lower-ranking officers would assert the right to disobey orders in the name of the emperor.

To make his case Orbach has mastered a variety of materials in five languages, including newspaper articles, diaries of soldiers and politicians, and diplomatic and military archives located in Japan, the US, Britain, Russia, and Switzerland. He also deftly intertwines approaches from cultural and institutional history. On the one hand he shows how feats of insubordination became valorized in public memory, thereby serving to legitimize future disobedience. On the other he delves confidently into the institutional nitty-gritty: arcane constitutional disputes, chains of command, and the nuanced factional politics that shaped military and civilian affairs alike.

To frame his argument, Orbach deploys the metaphor of a “software bug,” referring not just to the flaws inherent in the Meiji political settlement, but also to an extra-judicial malady: a culture that tolerated and even admired brazen acts of military insubordination. My students, many of whom might have found jargon unpalatable, found this analogy easy to grasp. Computation, after all, is one of the master metaphors of our age. It also opens up a host of questions. If a polity is a computer program, what is it designed to do exactly? Who wrote it, and for what purpose? If the program has multiple authors, then how, where, when, and why are different chunks of code grafted onto one another?

For me, the most interesting section of Orbach's book was his comparison of Japan and Germany, two nations which are, for obvious reasons, often lumped together as following a deviant path into modernity. Orbach argues that Japanese militarism stemmed not from choosing the “wrong [i.e. German] model,” but because in copying Prussian institutions “some of the crucial components were lost in translation” (95). While in Prussia distinctions between military and civilian elites were well entrenched, the leaders of Japan's Meiji Restoration were from the outset both politicians and soldiers, creating a blurred line between the two spheres. The irony here is that Japanese soldiers disobeyed their cautious civilian leaders, whereas their

German counterparts followed the (reckless) orders that were given to them.

Still, Germany aside, I found myself wondering how Japanese military insubordination compared to that of other modern armies. In his introduction, Orbach makes brief comparisons to military insubordination in other polities such as Tsarist Russia and even the US during its Annexation of Hawaii. I also thought of Clive of India and Gordon of the Khartoum, two adventurers who were later canonized in the British military pantheon. Indeed, the phenomenon of military insubordination makes for an excellent jumping-off point for a broader analysis of nineteenth-century state making. The Japanese state was hardly alone in undergoing profound transformations during this period. Apart from Germany there was also the Ottoman Tanzimat (1839–1876), Mexico's *La Reforma* (1857–1860), Italian Unification (1860), China's Tongzhi Restoration (1860–1874), Russia's Emancipation of the Serfs (1861), and the US Civil War and Reconstruction (1861–1877). Charles Meier describes the political model that emerged from this process of global convergence as "Leviathan 2.0" (another software metaphor).

Orbach recognizes that Japan's "bugs" also occurred in other polities, but ultimately concludes that "while Japan was not unique in general terms...the challenges [it] faced were also different, as were the responses of policymakers to that challenge. The distinct legacy of the Japanese past, especially the *shishi* and their ideology, played a particularly important role" (7). A devil's advocate might argue that the challenges facing Japan were not atypical, and that the *shishi* are comparable to nationalist revolutionaries such as Mazzini or Atatürk. Either way, Orbach's book is not just an important contribution to the historiography of Japan; it adds a key piece to the puzzle of understanding state-military relations across the global nineteenth century.

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**EMPEROR HIROHITO AND THE PACIFIC WAR.** By *Noriko Kawamura.*

*Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015. vii, 238 pp. (Map, illustrations.)*

*US\$34.94, cloth. ISBN 978-0-295-99517-5.*

This book, *Emperor Hirohito and the Pacific War*, is a well-balanced analysis of the controversial role Emperor Hirohito played during the Pacific War, drawing on previously unavailable primary sources. Noriko Kawamura sets herself a twofold task: first, to situate controversies surrounding Emperor Hirohito into appropriate historical contexts; second, to shed a new light on the work by past researchers on Emperor Hirohito's wartime deeds and responsibilities. Kawamura, in fact, is right in arguing that "even if the power of the throne was symbolic, not actual, the emperor could have taken symbolic responsibility for the war, although there would still be a need to clarify what would constitute symbolic war responsibility" (7). In the first three of the six