

# Colonial Takao: the making of a southern metropolis

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**ABSTRACT:** This article explores the relationship between colonial ideologies and urban planning in the context of the pre-war Japanese empire. It does so by examining the second largest city in what was Japan's first formal overseas colony of Taiwan. By exploring some of the key texts through which the city of Takao (Kaohsiung) was depicted and its future debated in the colonial era, the ways in which imperial ideologies, such as the 'southern advance' of the Japanese empire, influenced and were reflected in urban space will be considered.

Until the 1980s, the Japanese empire was a neglected area of research in Western academe. Its 50-year history and sweeping geography – stretching, as one observer phrased it, 'from the snows of Siberia to the equator'<sup>1</sup> – had been largely ignored outside area studies for much of the post-war period. And in the Anglophone tradition of imperial history, Japan has remained largely peripheral to its Britannic, Gallic and Iberian contemporaries. Yet in recent years, academic interest in Japan's pre-war colonial adventures has expanded, and a number of publications have heralded a new wave of analysis.<sup>2</sup>

Within this body of scholarship, questions of urban space, cities and architecture have developed into a lively realm of inquiry. In Louise Young's seminal work *Japan's Total Empire*, for instance, the 'showcases of municipal splendour' that epitomized Japan's pseudo-colony of Manchukuo (Manchuria) in the 1930s and 1940s, take a central position.<sup>3</sup> Young's work illustrates the emergence of a mythology of empire in the Manchurian cities of Dairen (now Dalian) and Shinkyō (now Changchun),

\* I thank *Urban History's* anonymous referees for their comments on earlier versions of this article. Any errors are, of course, my own.

<sup>1</sup> W. Price, *The South Sea Adventure: Through Japan's Equatorial Empire* (Tokyo, 1936), v.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the leading English-language works include R.H. Myers and M.R. Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* (Princeton, 1984); P. Duus, R.H. Myers and M.R. Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895–1937* (Princeton, 1989); M. Weiner, *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan* (London and New York, 1994); P. Duus, R.H. Myers and M.R. Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton, 1996); L.T.S. Ching, *Becoming 'Japanese': Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley, 2001). Other examples of recent work on the Japanese colonial empire will be explored at appropriate places below.

<sup>3</sup> L. Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley, 1997), 248–50.

which subsequently came to influence the ways in which colonial centres were designed and planned. The work of Tessa Morris-Suzuki on Japanese urban planning in the colony of Karafuto (now southern Sakhalin in Russia) has reached similar conclusions. As she suggests, the siting of colonial institutions – Shinto shrines, railway stations and so on – in Karafuto's colonial capital, Toyohara (now Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk), was informed as much by symbolic and ideological desires as by the necessities of colonial governance.<sup>4</sup> And in recent scholarship on the mandated Micronesian territories – those granted to Japan at Versailles – Keiko Ono and John Lea have built on the earlier work of Mark R. Peattie,<sup>5</sup> studying the form and design of colonial Japanese settler towns in Saipan and Tinian, and exploring what these can tell us about the mythology of colonial modernity.<sup>6</sup>

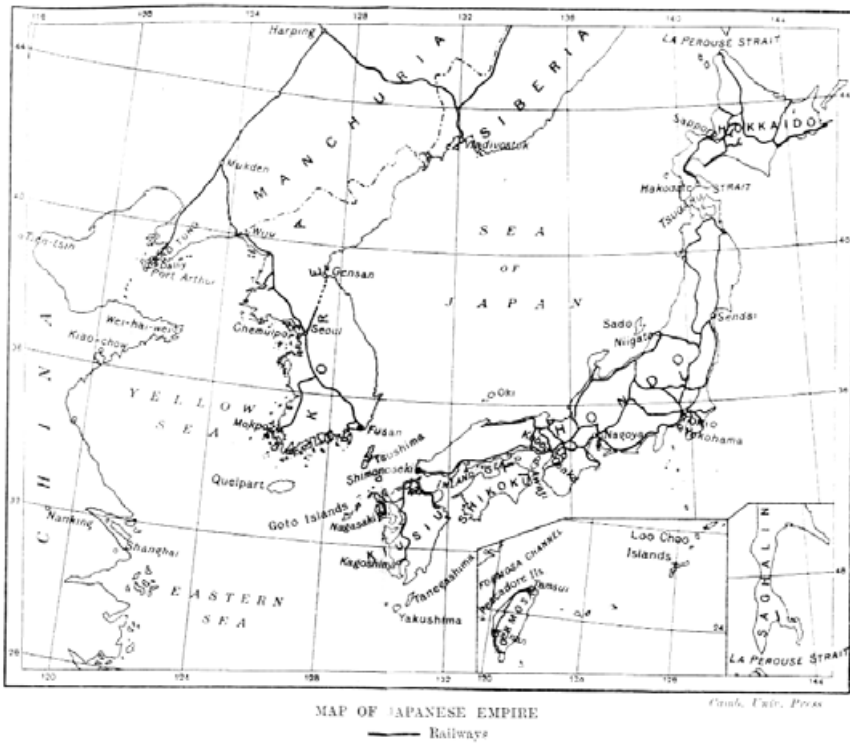
At one level, this article seeks to contribute to the literature on Japanese colonial cities and the mythologies that developed around them. As with some of the above-mentioned studies, this is an exploration of the relationship between a particular ideology that developed within the Japanese empire, and a particular urban landscape. I have chosen to approach this topic with reference to Takao (now Kaohsiung) – the second largest city in Japan's first formal colony of Taiwan. Though rarely recognized as such today, the history of Takao/Kaohsiung shares much with those of its municipal cousins in Manchuria, Karafuto and the Pacific, for it was here that the idea of the Japanese empire's 'southern advance' was, from the 1910s onwards, worked into depictions, and eventually the design, of what is now one of the world's busiest ports. By looking at the ways in which the streetscape of this city took shape under colonial rule, and how, in turn, certain mythologies concerning the city's geography and future were shaped in tandem with this topography, I hope to shed light on the interplay between colonial ideology and urban space more generally. In doing so, this article will also, hopefully, add to trends within the field of urban history which have seen an earlier focus on the Atlantic world tempered by an increasing interest in the urban past of the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> T. Morris-Suzuki, 'Shokuminchi shisō to imin: Toyohara no chōbō kara' (Colonialism and migration: from the landscapes of Toyohara), in Komori Yōichi *et al.* (eds.), *Iwanami Kōza Kindai Nihon no bunkashi 6: Kakudai suru modaniti 1920–30 nendai 2* (Iwanami lectures on modern Japanese cultural history, VI: Expanding modernity in the 1920s and 1930s, II) (Tokyo, 2002), 185–204.

<sup>5</sup> M.R. Peattie, *Nan'yō: The Rise And Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia: 1886–1945* (Honolulu, 1988), esp. 210–16.

<sup>6</sup> K. Ono and J. Lea, 'Colonial towns of the northern Marianas: rediscovering the urban morphology of Saipan and Tinian' (seminar presented at the Resource Management in the Asia-Pacific series, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 31 May 2001).

<sup>7</sup> This was recently noted in a special issue of the journal *Urban Studies*, entitled 'Contested landscapes, Asian cities'. See L. Kong and L. Law, 'Introduction: contested landscapes, Asian cities', *Urban Studies*, 39, 9 (2000), 1503–12.



**Figure 1:** Map of the Japanese empire

Source: J.H. Longford, *The Evolution of New Japan* (Cambridge, 1913), 166.

### Taiwan and the 'southern advance'

The *Nanshin*, or 'southern advance', of the pre-war Japanese empire is a subject that has exercised many scholars. Some of the better-known English-language studies of the topic, such as that of W.G. Beasley, have tended to examine the 'southern advance' through the lenses of military history or political economy.<sup>8</sup> Such studies have pointed out that the sense of Japan having some kind of destiny to advance southwards via trade, emigration and territorial expansion has a history that can be traced back to the sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup> The growing body of work on the 'southern advance' being produced by Taiwanese historians, on the other hand, has looked increasingly towards the importance of colonial Taiwan and coastal China in the development of the idea of the 'southern advance', examining

<sup>8</sup> W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894–1945* (New York, 1987), esp. 220–32.

<sup>9</sup> The other standard texts on the topic are Y. Toru, *Nanshin no keifu* (A genealogy of the southern advance) (Tokyo, 1975); and H.P. Frei, *Japan's Southward Advance and Australia: From the Sixteenth Century to World War II* (Honolulu, 1991).

the role of Taiwan-based organizations and individuals involved in Japan's encroachment on the Asian continent.<sup>10</sup>

Yet what exactly *was* the 'southern advance'? Mark Peattie's detailed study of this 'vague and polemic term' underscores the difficulties scholars face in trying to define this ideology.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, Peattie provides us with one of the most helpful definitions, when he argues that 'the southern advance'

embodied the idea that, by virtue of historical ties dating back to the sixteenth century, economic necessity, and of its place as the moral exemplar of Asia, Japan had a destiny to advance its influence toward the *Nan'yō* – the South Seas – an equally nebulous term which, after World War I, came to be thought of as including all of what is now Southeast Asia, Melanesia and Micronesia.<sup>12</sup>

Central to Peattie's above-quoted passage is the sense that the 'southern advance' encapsulated far more than geo-political, economic or military expansion. The *Nanshin* was, equally, an ideology, and one which developed its own set of symbols and vocabulary. In this sense, we would do well to note a point that Nicholas Thomas has raised in regards to the ways in which we approach the study of colonialism and its ideologies – that colonialism is not simply a 'political or economic relationship', but is also a 'cultural process . . . energized through signs, metaphors and narratives'.<sup>13</sup>

Browsing today through the catalogue of the Southern Resources Hall (Nanpō Shiryō Kan) – the archives of the Taiwan Nanpō Kyōkai, or 'Taiwan Southern Association', a Taihoku (Taipei)-based institution that was instrumental in collating and analysing information deemed relevant to the advance of Japanese imperialism during the 1930s – one is struck by the highly idealized fashion in which the idea of 'southern advance' was promulgated in colonial Taiwan. The vague and at times 'mystical'<sup>14</sup> nature

<sup>10</sup> The two leading Taiwanese scholars in this field over the last decade have been Zhong Shumin and Liang Huahuang. For some representative examples of work by the former, see 'Mingzhi moqi Taiwan zongdufu de "dui'an" jingying' (The operations of the Taiwan Government-General in China during the late Meiji period), *Taiwan fengwu*, 43, 3 (1993), 197–230; 'Rizhi shiqi Nanjin yanjiu zhi huigu yu zhanwang' (A retrospective and overview of the study of the southern advance of the Japanese colonial period), in *Zhonghua Minguo shi zhuanti lunwenji disi jie taolun hui* (The fourth ROC symposium on special topics in history) (Taipei, 1999), no page numbers. A recent example of Liang Huahuang's work is *Taiwan zongdufu de 'dui'an' zhengce yanjiu: Riju shidai Taiwan Min guanxi shi* (A study of the Taiwan Government-General's China policy: a history of Taiwan-Fujian relations during the period of Japanese rule) (Taipei, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> M.R. Peattie, 'Nanshin: the "southward advance", 1931–1941, as a prelude to the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia', in Duus, Myers and Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Wartime Empire*, 189–242.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>13</sup> N. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge, 1994), 2.

<sup>14</sup> A word used in 1936 by Clem Archer, British consul in Taihoku, when trying to articulate the nature of the 'southern advance' in an annual report on the colony. *National Archives of Australia: Department of External Affairs [III] Central Office; A981/4, Formosa Annual Reports*, 1 Jan. 1927–31 Dec. 1942; *Annual Report for Formosa for 1936*, 1.

of this concept came to typify ideas about 'the South' in Taiwan throughout much of the period of Japanese colonial rule. And it was through the data collected by Taiwan-based agencies such as the Southern Resources Hall that a visual and symbolic vocabulary of 'the South' evolved.

From the time of its incorporation into the Japanese empire in 1895, Taiwan was seen to be an experimental colony, a place in which various sciences that were themselves new to Japan could be tried without fear of failure.<sup>15</sup> In essence, Taiwan became a massive laboratory in which knowledge of the tropical world and administration in equatorial dominions could be collected, perfected and eventually distributed elsewhere throughout the empire. Much of this knowledge collection was informed by the ideology of the 'southern advance'. And within this ideological framework, a pattern emerged in which colonially backed organizations and enterprises would leave Taiwan for the 'South Seas', returning with things and knowledge which would in turn be analysed, reproduced or commodified in Taiwan, and exported and consumed throughout the empire.

In the early years of the twentieth century, for example, the Formosa Sugar Company (Taiwan Satō Kabushiki Kaisha) was already dispatching its scientists to places such as Java and Queensland to collect new varieties of cane that might be later mass-produced on the plains of southern Taiwan.<sup>16</sup> In later years, it was groups such as the Taiwan Development Company (Taiwan Takushoku Kabushiki Kaisha), an enterprise that collected and subsequently experimented with all kinds of tropical plant varieties from equatorial Asia and the Pacific, cultivating large tracts of land along Taiwan's eastern coast with tobacco, coffee and rubber, and eventually exporting its crops (and knowledge) to Japan and the occupied zones of Southeast Asia and southern China.<sup>17</sup> One could also point to the Bank of Taiwan (Taiwan Ginkō) – formed on the model of the Bank of Japan – that spent a good deal of time and funds collecting data on 'the trade of China and the South Seas', 'the financial institutions of the South Seas Chinese' and other related topics.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Taiwan was ceded to Japan by the Chinese government in 1895 in accordance with the Treaty of Shimonoseki, and following the latter's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–95. It remained under Japanese control until 1945, when it was 'retroceded' to Republican Chinese rule.

<sup>16</sup> M.A.E. Wileman, *Diplomatic and Consular Reports, No. 675 Miscellaneous Series: Report for the Year 1908 on the Sugar Industry of South Formosa* (London, 1908); O. Rutter, *Through Formosa: An Account of Japan's Island Colony* (London, 1923), 53.

<sup>17</sup> For some recent work on this organization, see A. Schneider, 'The Taiwan Development Company and Indochina: subimperialism, development and colonial status', *Taiwan Historical Research*, 5, 2 (1998), 101–32.

<sup>18</sup> Taiwan Ginkō, Chōsaka (Survey Section, Bank of Taiwan), *Shina to Nan'yō bōeki yōran* (An overview of the trade of China and the South Seas) (Taipei, 1920); Taiwan Ginkō, Sōmubu Chōsaka (Survey section, Department of General Affairs, Bank of Taiwan), *Nan'yō Kakyō no kin'yū kikan* (The financial institutions of the South Seas Chinese) (Taipei, 1915).

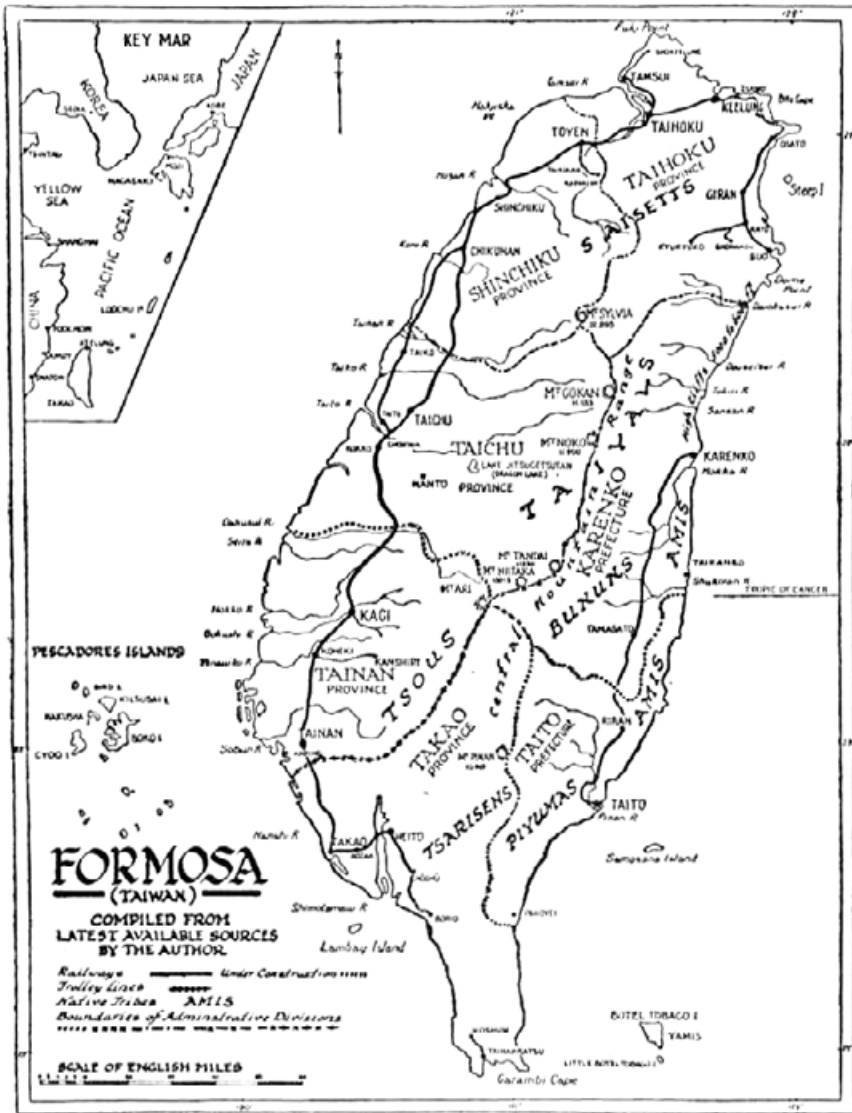


Figure 2: Colonial era map of Taiwan  
Source: O. Rutter, *Through Formosa: An Account of Japan's Island Colony* (London, 1923), 14.

What was true of companies was true also of governmental agencies. The Taiwan Government-General (Taiwan Sōtokufu) established a number of departments and bureaux dedicated to the study of 'the South', and/or the dissemination of the ideology of the 'southern advance'. Under the governorship of Gotō Shinpei, in particular, colonialism was made a

science within which tropical colonization became the single most important area of study. Gotō himself collected vast amounts of information on the administration of European and American colonies in Asia and the Pacific, for instance, whilst the first public library in Taiwan that was established under his governorship claimed as its 'distinctive characteristic' a 'large collection of rare and valuable books relating to South China'.<sup>19</sup> Such efforts were aided by research conducted at Taihoku Imperial University (Taihoku Teikoku Daigaku) which, following its establishment in 1928, claimed academic excellence in fields such as tropical medicine, botany and anthropology.<sup>20</sup>

### The palm: symbol of a southern landscape

The evolution of a discursive vocabulary of the tropics in nineteenth-century Europe forms the subject of Nancy Leys Stepan's work *Picturing Tropical Nature*. In that book, Stepan traces the emergence of a discourse of 'the tropics' within the workings of European imperial expansion, revealing how the publications of various naturalists and scientists were to have a profound impact on how Europeans came to visualize other parts of the world. Stepan's analysis stresses the significance of visual imagery in establishing a sense of difference and otherness between a temperate Europe and the landscapes of its tropical colonies. She examines the development of a visual vocabulary of the tropics, and notes the utilization of tropical nature, especially vegetation, as symbols of tropical landscapes.<sup>21</sup> In many cases, this transformation of plants into visual symbols involved the conscription of pre-existing botanic symbols into the service of a new visual archive of the 'tropics'. The classic example of this was the palm tree. The palm tree, argues Stepan, 'had long symbolized the origins of civilization in Asia or biblical desert lands of the Middle East'. Yet by the end of the nineteenth century, palm trees had become 'the ubiquitous sign of the tropics, images of . . . [them] . . . instantly signalling less a botanical species than an imaginative submersion in hot places'.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The Government of Formosa, *Progressive Formosa* (Taipei, 1926), 82.

<sup>20</sup> A comprehensive list of educational and academic institutions specializing in *Nanshin*-related knowledge in Taiwan (and for that matter metropolitan Japan) is provided in *Nanshin Seinenkai* (The *Nanshin* Youth Association), *Dai Nanyō o hiraku* (Colonize the Great South Seas) (Tokyo, 1942), 207–43. A permanent exhibition in the University History Room (*Xiaoshi shi*) of the National Taiwan University today provides details of the academic study of 'the South' at that institution in colonial times.

<sup>21</sup> N.L. Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature* (Ithaca, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 33. It should be noted that the city which forms the basis of this article, i.e., Takao/Kaohsiung, was directly involved in the European formation of a body of knowledge and imagery about the tropics in the nineteenth century. One of the founders of the field of 'tropical medicine', Sir Patrick Manson, spent a number of years in the treaty port of Takao (Kaohsiung) as a medical officer in the Chinese customs service; he based some of his early work on tropical diseases he had encountered there. P.H. Manson-Bahr and A. Alcock, *The Life and Work of Sir Patrick Manson* (London, 1927), 5–7.

As had been the case with the tropics of nineteenth-century European imperialism, there evolved an elaborate set of visual vocabulary about the generic 'South' of imperial Japan's 'southern advance' in colonial Taiwan. Together with a vast corpus of knowledge being assembled in metropolitan Japan, the data collected and published by many of the above-mentioned agencies and enterprises in Taiwan formed a reservoir of knowledge about the 'South Seas', Southeast Asia and southern China. This became particularly prevalent from the 1910s onwards, and the most frequently recurrent images within this vocabulary were, like those in Europe decades earlier, botanic or floral in nature. Indeed, in *Nanshin* thought, it was often the *same* botanic symbols that came to be associated with the generic South as had been employed in the service of European depictions of the tropics.

An example is the palm tree. The palm tree was the icon most commonly associated with the ideology of the 'southern advance' in Taiwan. Countless books, magazines and journals made liberal use of artistic impressions of palm trees. The 'palm plantation' (*yashi'en*) was said by some advocates of the 'southern advance' to be the most representative of 'South Seas' landscapes;<sup>23</sup> some theorists went so far as to write of the 'southern advance' ushering in a new 'palm tree era' to replace the eras associated with production of other tropical commodities (rubber, coffee and so on) that had preceded it.<sup>24</sup>

In colonial Taiwan, however, palm trees hardly symbolized an exotic or distant landscape as they might have done for Stepan's Victorian readers or the metropolitan Japanese public. On the contrary, palm trees were everywhere. Palms were cultivated all over the island by colonial authorities. The Taihoku Botanical Gardens, for instance, boasted numerous species of palm, and postcards of 'the cocoanut [*sic*] trees in the Taihoku Botanical Garden' were reproduced for tourists.

Many varieties of palm employed in the colonial landscape were imported from other tropical localities. The Cuban Royal palm, or *roystonea regia* genus, for instance, became the *arbre d'alignement* of choice for Japanese city planners, its use being an emulation of techniques used in European colonies throughout the tropics.<sup>25</sup> This genus was planted neatly along the thoroughfares of many of the island's major cities, including Taihoku and Takao. And the main road running through the middle of that centre of 'southern' academia, the aforementioned Taihoku Imperial University, became known for its palm-lined walkways (an association

<sup>23</sup> T. Ōno, *Nanshin shigi* (My views on the southern advance) (Tokyo, 1915), 72–6.

<sup>24</sup> T. Ōno and K. Satō, *Nangoku* (The southern land) (Tokyo, 1915).

<sup>25</sup> Many colonial era works on the topic cite European and American city planning examples. See for example, Taiwan Sōtokufu, Eirinkyoku (Taiwan Government-General, Bureau of Forestry), *Kōdōju to shison shokuju yōran* (An overview of *arbres d'alignement* and the planting of trees in towns and villages) (Taipei, 1920). On the European development of the 'tree-lined boulevard' more generally, see H.W. Lawrence, 'Origins of the tree-lined boulevard', *Geographical Review*, 78, 4 (1988), 355–74.





**Figure 3:** Postcard showing 'The Cocoanut [sic] Trees in the Taihoku Botanical Garden' (courtesy of the Institute of Taiwan History, Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica)

that remains strong to this day). These trees were said to afford relief from the tropical sun, whilst creating a 'South Seas' ambience in many urban centres.<sup>26</sup> Other species of tropical palm, such as the betel palm (*areca catechu*), were harnessed as decorative embellishments in the gardens of public buildings, parks and educational institutions. The result was to transform the colony into a *Nangoku*, or 'southern land' – a site from which the empire gazed towards the realms of the 'South Seas'.<sup>27</sup>

### The making of Takao

Given the highly centralized nature of colonial administration in Taiwan, few places could compete with the colonial capital of Taihoku for the sheer concentration of expertise and data concerning the empire's southern advance. This is not to suggest that this ideology and the ideas about space and geography that it brought with it meant anything less for other Taiwanese localities, however. Indeed, as we shall see below, the city of Takao was in many ways the main urban centre in which the knowledge

<sup>26</sup> S. Matayoshi, *Taiwan jinxi zhi lü* (A tour of Taiwan, then and now), trans. Wei Tingchao (Taipei, 1997), 80–1.

<sup>27</sup> I. Yamakawa, *Saikin no nanbu Taiwan* (Southern Taiwan recently) (Tainan, 1923). A virtually identical passage appears in Taiwan Sōtokufu, Kōtsūkyoku, Tetsudōbu (Railways Department, Bureau of Transport, Taiwan Government-General), *Taiwan kankō no kan* (A guide to sight-seeing in Taiwan) (Taipei, 1939), 28.

analysed and collated in Taihoku was distilled into an urban mythology of 'southernness', and, later, into real and concrete things – roads, port facilities and public buildings.<sup>28</sup> Much of the physical transformation of this city undertaken between the early 1900s and Second World War was clearly tied to the 'southern advance'. And by the outbreak of the Pacific War, few urban landscapes in Taiwan were quite as representative of the 'southern advance' as was Takao.

The relationship between the design of Takao under colonial rule and the 'southern advance' of imperial Japan forms the topic of a Masters thesis completed by Li Shufen at Taiwan's National Cheng Kung University in 1995.<sup>29</sup> To my knowledge, this thesis represents the only academic analysis of the influence of this ideology on the shape of Takao/Kaohsiung. Li's study details a range of public works programmes that saw what had been a series of minor fishing settlements, Chinese military outposts and a small but thriving treaty port transformed into Taiwan's second largest city and busiest harbour by the 1930s. Yet whilst Li contributes substantially to our understanding of Takao's urban development, her thesis does not take into account the substantial differences in the way in which the ideology of the 'southern advance' influenced the development of Takao over time, for the relationship was not quite as simple as it might seem at first. Takao was not always a 'southern' city, though it had certainly become one by the 1930s.

The need for a large, modern harbour in southern Taiwan was identified as an economic necessity for the colony by a young Director of Civil Affairs, Gotō Shinpei, during his inspection tour of the island in 1899.<sup>30</sup> This was linked to a general sense amongst Japanese planners that Taiwan was of strategic and maritime importance, both in its proximity to the coast of southern China and to 'southern' places such as the Philippines. This point

<sup>28</sup> I do not employ this idea of an 'urban *mythology*' here in a critical studies sense – as a 'fallacious thought' that represents something inherently false about the city and which obscures a genuine or more authentic history. For such a definition, see G. Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge, 1996), 9–13. I would instead agree with Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson's charge that mythologies (including those imposed by governments, colonial or otherwise) deserve to be taken seriously as artifacts worth examination. See R. Samuel and P. Thompson, 'Introduction', in R. Samuel and P. Thompson (eds.), *The Myths we Live By* (London, 1990), 1–22.

<sup>29</sup> S. Li, 'Ribei Nanjin zhengce xia de Gaoxiang jianshe' (The development of Kaohsiung under Japan's southern advance policy) (unpublished National Cheng Kung University Masters thesis, 1995).

<sup>30</sup> The choice of Takao may have reflected a desire by colonial authorities to override objections and difficulties that would have been faced if attempts to modernize another pre-existing port nearby (i.e. Anping) had been carried through. The port of Anping, servicing what had been the prefectural capital of Taiwan (now Tainan), was one of the most commercially important trading ports in southern Taiwan throughout the nineteenth century. In his book *Lukang: Commerce and Community in a Chinese City* (Albany, 1995), D.R. DeGlopper notes that there is at least a popular belief in Taiwan that other harbours developed under Japanese colonial rule, such as Taichung harbour (known during the colonial era as 'Niitaka kō'), were likewise built anew so as to avoid the need to improve existing ports (115–19).

was articulated as early as 1896 by the colony's second Governor-General, Katsura Tarō, who wrote: 'Taiwan, facing the coastal region of South China, with the Pescadores in between, is not only connected with South China by transportation links to the important port of Amoy [Xiamen], but also reaches towards the South Seas.'<sup>31</sup>

However, at this early stage of planning, there is little evidence to suggest that Takao (rather than other ports in southern Taiwan, such as Anping) was chosen directly as the site for a large, new harbour because of pre-existing links to the 'South Seas', the prevalence of a southern landscape or a prophecy that Takao would become the main base from which military forces would be dispatched to southern battlefields in future decades. In fact, the reasons were more pragmatic than ideological, and were related primarily to the proximity of Takao to the fertile plains of the island's south-west. A modern port in the southern portion of Taiwan would aid in the transfer of raw materials, such as sugar and timber, to metropolitan Japanese markets.<sup>32</sup>

Plans to develop Takao and its environs were drawn up in tandem with the construction of a modern port in Taiwan's North at Kiirun (Keelung). The decision to undertake public works projects in Takao must thus be understood within an island-wide context of improvements to the efficiency of the colony's transport and communications, and the extension of major roads and railway lines that was undertaken almost as soon as Taiwan had been annexed. Moreover, it coincided with the promotion of modern European city-planning techniques in Taiwan, including the erasure of traditional Chinese city walls in many settlements around the island, and the adoption of rational grid-patterned towns and cities.<sup>33</sup> In creating modern cities in Taiwan, Japanese colonialism could be legitimized in a family of modern imperialisms in Asia.

The building of a modern port city in Takao involved changing the face of the area's seaboard.<sup>34</sup> The first phase of a land reclamation programme

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in S. Hajime, 'Southeast Asia in modern Japanese thought: the development and transformation of "Nanshin Ron"' (unpublished paper, Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1980), 20. I am indebted to one of the anonymous referees of *Urban History* for bringing this passage to my attention.

<sup>32</sup> Rice was also a factor. It is ironic that the need for a harbour at the southern end of the empire was reinforced during the Russo-Japanese war, a time when the idea of a 'northward advancing' (*hokushin*) empire was far more prevalent. Shipments of rice left Takao in 1904 for Japanese troop formations in North Asian theatres of war. *Japan. Supplementary Report for the Year 1904 on the Trade of the Consular District of Tainan (S. Formosa)*, No. 3490 (reprinted in Taipei, 1972), 8.

<sup>33</sup> C. Hsia, 'Zhimin de xiandaixing yingzao: chongxie Riben zhimin shiqi Taiwan jianzhu yu chengshi lishi' (Constructing colonial modernity: re-writing the architectural and urban history of Taiwan during the Japanese colonial era), *Taiwan shehui yanjiu jikan*, 40 (2000), 47–82.

<sup>34</sup> That the construction or extension of port cities is usually connected to wider transport and communications schemes is a point made by B.J. Hudson, *Cities on the Shore: The Urban Littoral Frontier* (London and New York, 1996), 52.

around the foreshores of a shallow Takao harbour was undertaken between 1900 and 1908 by the Taiwan Land Construction Company (Taiwan Jisho Kenchiku Kabushiki Kaisha).<sup>35</sup> Reclamation coincided with what was perhaps the most important infrastructural project undertaken in the new colony – the completion of the North–South trunk railway line.<sup>36</sup> Takao had been designated as the southern terminus of this railway line, and reclamation work had been undertaken on the Takao waterfront with the specific aim of providing land for a new railway station and its affiliated industries. The ‘new town’<sup>37</sup> of Takao that resulted from this reclamation radiated northwards from the railway station. The station itself – a modest, wooden building – was adorned in the years after its completion with decorative palm groves at its main entrance, and would not have looked out of place in British India or French Indochina.

It was this area, in the vicinity of the station, that became, for the next decade or more, the heart of the town’s Japanese community.<sup>38</sup> Here, ‘all the administrative buildings and large mercantile institutions . . . [of the town were] . . . situated’.<sup>39</sup> And within a few years, a rudimentary Shinto shrine, serving the young Japanese community that settled in the area, was built at a site just a few minutes’ walk from the station. Although this original Shinto shrine no longer exists, the many tightly packed terrace houses, shop fronts and distinctively Japanese timber dwellings that can still be seen in the district around the old railway station today bear witness to this period of the city’s history.

It was no coincidence that the project to create a modern deep-water harbour began in Takao just a few months before the first trains from the North were pulling into the town’s new railway station in 1908. The construction of this new harbour was a substantial project. Natural rock formations at the harbour’s entrance which had previously hindered the movement of larger vessels were demolished, and shifting bars that

<sup>35</sup> For the official story of these land-reclamation projects and their relation to harbour works in Takao, see Rinji Taiwan Sōtokufu, Kōjibu, Takao Shutchōjo (Takao branch office, Department of Public Works, Provisional Taiwan Government-General), *Takao chikkō kōji* (Harbour works in Takao) (Kaohsiung, 1917); Taiwan Sōtokufu, Dobokukyoku (Bureau of Civil Engineering, Taiwan Government-General), *Takao chikkō yōran* (An overview of harbour works in Takao) (Taipei, 1923).

<sup>36</sup> I say *completion* of the North–South trunk line, because the beginnings of such a line had in fact been put in place during the latter period of imperial Chinese rule on the island. For a more detailed study of the origins of the trunk line and the adaptation of the plan under Japanese rule, see Y. Takahashi, *Nihon shokuminchi tetsudō shiron* (A history of Japanese colonial railways) (Tokyo, 1995), 13–53.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Minato-chō at the foot of Kotobukiyama is the oldest part of the city and is the site of government offices and residences’. Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, *Civil Affairs Handbook, Taiwan (Formosa): Takao Province*. OPAN 13–22 (Washington, 1944), 71.

<sup>38</sup> One which, through the Takao Homelenders Association (Takao Naichijin Kumiai), documented its own existence and history. See Takao Naichijin Kumiai, *Takao shō enkaku shi* (A short history of Takao) (Tainan, 1916).

<sup>39</sup> Japan Tourist Bureau, Taipei Branch, *Tainan and Vicinity: Takao and Anping* (Taipei, 1919), 10.



**Figure 4:** Colonial era Japanese housing in Kaohsiung today (photograph by the author, 2002)

were deemed hazardous to shipping were dredged, as was much of the harbour floor, thus furnishing anchorage for steamships of an increasing size. Coastal mangrove swamps around the northern and southern shores of the harbour were almost completely cleared. And along the harbour's northern banks, quays, warehouses and customs facilities were built, with the extensive Shinhama wharf,<sup>40</sup> located just a short distance from the railway station, becoming the centrepiece in this new set of waterside infrastructure.

Harbour construction continued unabated through the years of the First World War – stimulated by the lull in maritime industries that was being experienced in Europe – and the construction and adaptation of port facilities developed apace. In creating the modern port city of Takao, colonial engineers frequently appropriated portions of the pre-existing landscape, both natural and built, which could play a functional role in this new port city. Chinese fortifications near the fishing community of Kigō on the southern banks of the harbour were renovated and used as naval installations;<sup>41</sup> the same district claimed a British-designed lighthouse that had been administered by the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs Service in treaty port days, and this structure was likewise replaced with a new

<sup>40</sup> Shinhama literally means 'new seaboard'.

<sup>41</sup> Ironically, the same fort had been first built in the 1870s to repel a Japanese expeditionary force.



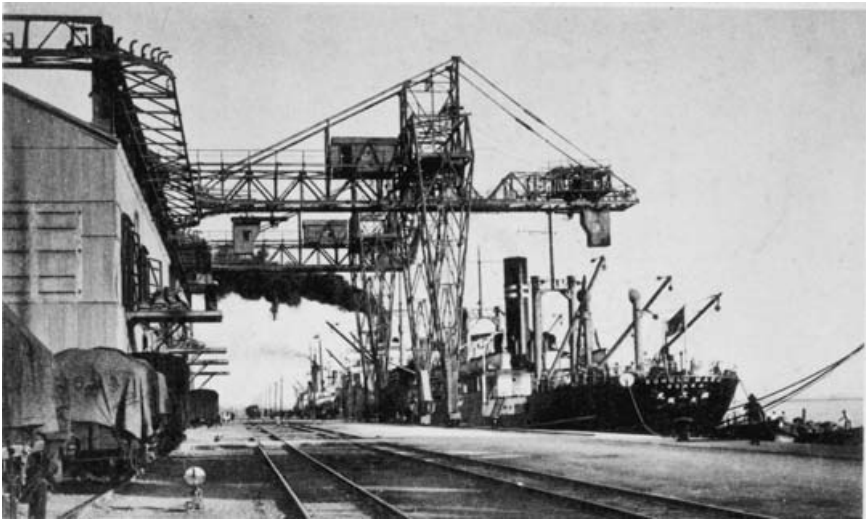
**Figure 5:** Young residents of the Takao ‘new town’ near the railway station, c. early 1910s (courtesy of the Institute of Taiwan History, Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica)

state-of-the-art facility at the start of the first phase of harbour construction in 1908.<sup>42</sup> By the late 1910s, Takao had thus been completely transformed from a peripheral port into Taiwan’s most modern port city south of the colony’s capital.

### From railway terminus to ‘southern’ metropolis

Up until the First World War, Takao’s development can thus be understood as part of a wider process of colony-building; a new harbour was deemed necessary so that the communications and transport system of the island as a whole could be modernized. Takao was juxtaposed to Keelung in the North, the two becoming major hubs at either end of a railway line and various shipping routes. However, there is little to suggest that Takao itself, the layout of its streets or the design of its infrastructure, was an expression of a *Nanshin* imagination at this early stage. Indeed, if anything, the transformation of Takao had been started upon at a time when the idea of Japan’s manifest ‘southern’ destiny was experiencing something of a lull, and when the Russo-Japanese war saw the empire’s popular imagination turn sharply towards the North.

<sup>42</sup> Shen Wentai, *Yandun liang bai nian* (Two centuries of lighthouses) (Taichung, 1998), 18–22.



**Figure 6:** Takao harbour, c. 1920s (courtesy of the Institute of Taiwan History, Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica)

It was only in the late 1910s, and *after* many of the proposed improvements to the harbour had been completed, that Takao discovered its 'southern' self. And this happened rather suddenly. In their book *The Industrial Area of Taiwan: Takao Harbour*, published two years before the granting to Japan of a League of Nations mandate in Micronesia, the publisher Tanaka Kazuji and Takao-based journalist Shiba Tadachi detail the development of various infrastructural projects in and around the port of Takao from the late 1890s to the end of the First World War.<sup>43</sup> Yet there is a surprising element of imagination and emotion evident in the closing pages of their work. Here, with reference to palm trees, coral reefs and tropical islands, the authors begin to summon up an almost magical vision of a southern world that lies just beyond Takao's horizon. All at once, Takao is no longer just a port; it is a platform from which one might gaze southwards towards a checkerboard of islands rich in exotic flora and fauna. The authors in fact describe Takao as a stage from which the 'homeland of our Yamato [i.e. Japanese] race' (*waga Yamato minzoku no furusato*), nestled amongst coral reefs and swaying coconut palms, can almost be seen.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Tanaka Kazuji and Shiba Tadachi, *Taiwan no kōgyōchi: Takao kō* (The industrial area of Taiwan: Takao harbour) (Taipei, 1918).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 111–12. In this regard, the book shows some interesting influences from racial debates of the time in which Japanese ethnic origins were claimed by some theorists to be found in realms of 'the South'. For further details of such debates, see T. Morris-Suzuki, 'Becoming Japanese: imperial expansion and identity crises in the early twentieth century', in Sharon A. Minichiello (ed.), *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy 1900–1930* (Honolulu, 1998), 157–80.

The tone of this book combines the dry language of the engineer with the most emotional elements of the 'southern advance'. Yet it represents the rule rather than the exception, for within the space of a few years, Takao-based authors and groups had found a new *raison d'être* for their city beyond the export of commodities, the ease of transport or a railway terminus. A renewed excitement about the empire's push southwards, inspired by Japan's acquisition of the Micronesian territories, and coinciding with 'the Taiwanese economy [being] further integrated into Japanese expansion to the South',<sup>45</sup> gave Takao's geography on Taiwan's southern coast an entirely new significance.

This transformation of Takao – from a peripheral bay into a large modern harbour; and from a functional port into a southward-gazing one – was codified by colonial officialdom in 1920. In May of that year, the city was rechristened by the Government-General. The two Chinese characters that had formed the name Takao prior the 1920s and had sufficed since the late imperial Chinese period (i.e. 打狗 – a name derived from an Aboriginal phrase meaning 'bamboo forest'), were replaced with the two characters 高雄.<sup>46</sup> The new toponym was a borrowed one; it belonged to a mountain near Kyoto. Yet it fulfilled the dual purpose of sounding virtually identical ('Takao') to its predecessor when read in Japanese, and fitting the heroic mood of the era. Now, Takao was said to be 'flying high and valiantly in the realms of the South',<sup>47</sup> and was ready to take its place at the edge of an expanding empire.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, so popular was the new toponym that it was evoked again only a few years later in christening a new model of warship in the fleet of the Imperial Navy.<sup>49</sup>

Writing shortly after the town had been given its new name, a Western visitor to Takao was in no doubt that he had arrived in a tropical metropolis, one in which 'monkeys scamper through the shrubbery . . . palm-trees here and there stand out against the dense tropical sky-line' and where 'flowers grow in a certain profusion in Japanese gardens and in the modified jungle beyond the outskirts'.<sup>50</sup> Another foreign traveller who passed through the city in the early 1920s noted the 'streets were broad and well laid out;

<sup>45</sup> Ching, *Becoming 'Japanese'*, 102. The fact that the 1918–20 period marked a turning point in Taiwan as a whole is something that Ching remarks upon here, despite his study being related to assimilationist policies rather than the concept of *Nanshin*.

<sup>46</sup> The character 'taka' 高 means 'high'; 'o' (or 'yū') 雄 means 'brave'. Together, the two are pronounced 'Takao'. The same characters are still used today, rendered as 'Gaoxiang' in the official *Hanyu Pinyin* system of Romanization used in the People's Republic of China and in Singapore, but as 'Kaohsiung' in Taiwan. It should be noted that in some English-language texts from the nineteenth century, Takao was written as 'Takow', though this spelling appears to have been seldom used after the 1920 change of characters.

<sup>47</sup> Y. Zeng, *Gaoxiang shi diming tanyuan* (Discussion of the origins of Kaohsiung's toponyms) (Kaohsiung, 1997), 143.

<sup>48</sup> For more on the Japanese origins of the toponym Takao, see Yin Demin, 'Gaoxiang shi deming yuanyuan zhi yanjiu (xia)' (An investigation of the origins of the toponym Takao [Kaohsiung] (Part II)), *Gao shi wenxian*, 2, 4 (1990), 15–30.

<sup>49</sup> J. Skulski, *The Heavy Cruiser Takao* (London, 1994).

<sup>50</sup> H.A. Franck, *Glimpses of Japan and Formosa* (London and New York, 1924), 161.



in some of them avenues of coconut trees had been planted'.<sup>51</sup> In other words, the very urban mythology that had been emerging since the 1910s was already finding its way into the city's landscape.

In 1924, and following an administrative restructure of the colony, Takao was designated as a self-governing city and given its own municipal government, or *shiyakusho*. A new city bureaucracy was subsequently formed, undertaking the governance and depiction of Takao out of offices dotted throughout the quarter around the railway station. It was this new level of Takao-based local bureaucracy that, by the 1930s, began commonly referring to Takao as not simply a city that looked towards the South, but as 'the *Nanshin's* site of origin' (*Nanshin no kigenchi*), or 'the base of the southern advance' (*Nanshin no konkyochi*).<sup>52</sup> These were terms for the city not necessarily formulated in Tokyo or Taihoku as much as in Takao itself. And it was local groups such as the Takao Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Takao Shōkō Kaigisho), along with its bureaucratic allies at the *shiyakusho*, that promoted them with the most vigour, applying such ideas to the city through their publications and activities.<sup>53</sup> The 'southern advance' and its vocabulary was appropriated by Takao-based interests and the city's local administration in their efforts to encourage investment in the city, Japanese migration to the city, funds from the Government-General and, to some lesser extent, domestic and international tourism.

This *Nanshin*-inspired urban mythology that emerged over the next decade had infiltrated almost all official depictions of Takao by late 1920s and early 1930s. The Takao harbour exhibition (*Takao kōsei tenrankai*) is a case in point. This event was held in May 1931 to celebrate the completion of yet another phase of harbour construction which had seen the port furnished with more facilities, and the size of the city swell with labour from surrounding areas. The event was organized by the city's municipal authorities, and involved the participation of official and business groups such as the above-mentioned Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with the local representatives of Japanese shipping giants Nippon Yusen Kaisha and the Ōsaka Shōsen Kaisha also involved. The exhibition entailed official

<sup>51</sup> Rutter, *Through Formosa*, 4. Interestingly, Rutter suggests that the 'coconut trees' he observed in Takao were in fact ill-suited to the city's climate, and were thus 'not flourishing' at the time of his visit.

<sup>52</sup> For some representative examples of the uses of these phrases, see Shiba Tadachi, *Shinkō no Takao* (Rising Takao) (Kaohsiung, 1930), 241; Takao Kōwan Kyōkai (Takao Harbour Association), *Takao Kōwan Kyōkai gaiyō* (An outline of the Takao Harbour Association) (Kaohsiung, n.d.), 1; Takao Shū, Chiji Kanbō, Bunshoka (Documents Section, Takao Province Governor's Office Secretariat), *Takao Shūsei ichiran* (A summary of conditions in Takao Province) (Kaohsiung, 1936), 1–2; S. Katayama and K. Nakayama, *Yakushin Takao no zenbo* (A complete overview of the rising Takao) (Tokyo, 1940).

<sup>53</sup> Typical of this was the Chamber of Commerce and Industry's journals *Takao Economic Information* (*Takao keizai jōhō*) and *Takao Industry and Commerce Review* (*Takao shōkō jūhō*), which commonly featured articles stressing Takao's connections to South China and Southeast Asia, and made continual references to the city as the 'base of the southern advance'.

functions and exhibitions, as well as public celebrations of the port and the city around it. Many of the city's newly assembled public buildings were for the first time floodlit in the evening; regattas and other water-based activities were scheduled to coincide with the event. Significantly, the exhibition was officially opened on the Shinhama wharf.<sup>54</sup>

On the placards that greeted visitors in the exhibition halls, Takao was compared with other 'great ports' of the world. Yet most importantly of all, Takao was presented as the southern port *par excellence* of the Japanese empire – the 'uniquely finest harbour at the southern extremities of the empire' (*teikoku no kyokunan muni no ryōkō*) as the city's mayor of the day, Imai Shōji, phrased it.<sup>55</sup> Posters produced to accompany the exhibition made full use of visual imagery that had come to dominate depictions of the South, showing Takao as a thoroughly modern yet tropical metropolis. Two towering art deco ocean-liners float in a harbour bustling with commerce; in the foreground are palm fronds. The Japanese flag flies from a ship's mast. Such symbolism did not stop at the printed paraphernalia that accompanied this exhibition, but was present even in the lyrics of the *Takao Harbour Exhibition Marching Song* (*Takao kōsei tenrankai kōshinka*), which exclaimed:

Palm fronds shade the chirping birds; Fishes leap beneath the mangrove trees;  
In our joyous land of Takao; Let us sing and rejoice.<sup>56</sup>

There was, of course, a large gap between the realities of a developing and industrializing Takao in the 1930s and the southern-inspired iconography that groups such as the municipal government promoted through this particular event, and indeed through many publications. Yet at the same time, the influence that these concepts of what the South should look and feel like in Takao had on the further development of the city cannot be underestimated. At the turn of the twentieth century, Takao may not have been designated as a site at which the ideology of the 'southern advance' would be translated into urban planning, yet in the post-First World War era, this is in many respects what happened.

### An imperial streetscape

With the completion of the Sun Moon Lake hydro-electric scheme in 1933 providing high voltage electrical power to the city through a series of new and interconnected substations, Takao grew and industrialized at

<sup>54</sup> Takao Shiyakusho (Takao City Government), *Takao kōsei tenrankai* (Takao Harbour Exhibition) (Kaohsiung, 1931), 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. Similar descriptions can be found throughout Takao Shiyakusho, *Takao tai kan* (A general survey of Takao) (Kaohsiung, 1930).

<sup>56</sup> This is the song's second verse. See Takao City Government, *The Takao Harbour Exhibition*, 207.



**Figure 7:** Promotional material from the Takao harbour exhibition (courtesy of the National Central Library, Taiwan Branch, Taipei)

a rapid pace.<sup>57</sup> The heavy industry of Japanese conglomerates – Asano cement, Mitsubishi, Mitsui and so on – established factories in and around the city, where land and labour were cheap. This, in turn, stimulated the demographic and geographic growth of Takao, with the city's population passing the 100,000 mark in 1937. It was also in the 1930s – with the increasing militarization of the Japanese empire in the wake of the Mukden incident of 1931<sup>58</sup> – that Takao's strategic position, and its importance to Japan's navy in particular, was increasingly appreciated.

<sup>57</sup> On the importance of the Sun Moon Lake hydro-electric scheme to the industrialization of Taiwan, see B. Lin, *Taiwan dianli zhushi huishi fazhan shi: Taiwan jingyan de kaiduan* (A history of the development of the Taiwan Electricity Company: a first step towards the Taiwan experience) (Taipei, 1997), 125–31.

<sup>58</sup> The event that presaged Japan's invasion of southern Manchuria.

The development of a naval base in the city's north has been examined at length by Liu Fenghan of Taiwan's Academia Sinica in his history of the Japanese military in Taiwan.<sup>59</sup> As Liu has noted, the project to develop state-of-the-art naval installations in and around the northern outskirts of Takao was undertaken in 1938, only shortly before this area was officially included within the borders of Takao city. Two years later, the Government-General transferred most land entitlements in the area *en masse* to the Japanese Imperial Navy, with many residents being evicted or forcibly resettled thereafter.<sup>60</sup>

In tandem with the shift towards industrialization and increasing militarization of the city at this time, the appearance of Takao itself was further transformed. Avenues and boulevards of extraordinary width were designed to radiate outwards from the harbour and the bureaucratic centres of town,<sup>61</sup> linking Takao's harbour-front districts with what had previously been considered peripheral areas. In turn, a whole new set of public buildings were built, designed to represent the city's self-imposed role as the 'base of the southern advance'. A new Shinto shrine, for instance, was sited on the slopes of Mount Longevity and was consecrated in 1929. Considerably larger than the building that had served as the city's original shrine, the new structure, which looked out over an expanding city and its harbour, reflected the increasingly nationalistic tendencies of the Japanese administration of Taiwan in this era.

Another representative example was the new *shiyakusho* building, erected to house the chambers of Takao's municipal government. Officially opened amid great fanfare in 1939, this building was indicative of the increasing trend towards militarism and 'Pan-Asianism' that accompanied the empire's territorial expansion in China. Most noticeably, the building featured a 'crown-style' roof that suggested ancient Chinese styles of court architecture, and which echoed the design of government buildings that were being designed in Manchukuo at the same time.<sup>62</sup>

Other buildings designed in Takao during this period shared these aesthetic traits. The city's new railway station, for instance, which was designed to replace the earlier building which had originally been so central to early colonial era Takao, was typical. Subsidized by the Government-General's Railways Department (and completed, significantly, only months prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour), the station building reflected in its 'crown-style' roof a view of Takao's place

<sup>59</sup> F. Liu, *Rijun zai Taiwan: yi ba jiu ba nian zhi yi jiu si wu nian de junshi cuoshi yu zhuyao huodong* (The Japanese military in Taiwan: military planning and important activities, 1895–1945), vol. I (Taipei, 1997), 192–210.

<sup>60</sup> S. Zhang, *Xun gen zhi lu: tazhe xianren de zuji wang qian zou* (A tour in search of our roots: moving forward in the footsteps of our ancestors) (Kaohsiung, 1997), 2.

<sup>61</sup> Designed, perhaps, with the movement of military hardware in mind.

<sup>62</sup> The building still stands today. It continued to be used as the municipal headquarters of the city well into the post-war decades, and was converted into the Kaohsiung Museum of History in 1998.



**Figure 8:** The new Takao Shinto shrine, shortly after its completion in 1929 (courtesy of the Institute of Taiwan History, Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica)

within the empire that was coloured by Japan's military expansion on the Asian continent, and the increasingly vehement rhetoric of 'Pan-Asianism'.

The Takao streetscape was thus not simply functional – its symbolic role was of equal importance. And while public buildings such as the chambers of the municipal government, the railway station and the Shinto shrine all contained inherent architectural references to the Pan-Asianist tendencies prevalent throughout the empire by the late 1930s, they were embellished with a colonial mythology that imagined Takao at the southern frontier of empire. Typical of this was the far-fetched, though extremely powerful, claim that, from one particular thoroughfare – Shōwa Road,<sup>63</sup> located in front of the new railway station – one could gaze southwards 'as far as the Spratly Islands' in the South China Sea.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Shōwa was the name given to Hirohito's reign as Japanese emperor (1928–89).

<sup>64</sup> This is summarized in Ye Xiuzhen, 'Gaoxiongshi fazhan lishi zhongyao yinsu zhi yanjiu' (A study of the important factors behind the history of Kaohsiung's development) (unpublished National Sun Yat-sen University Masters thesis, 1985), 94.



**Figure 9:** The new railway station, c. late 1940s (courtesy of the Institute of Taiwan History, Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica)

In this top-down structuring of both a southern streetscape and an associated mythology of Takao, that most pervasive symbol of the South, the palm tree, was omnipresent. Many of Takao's main streets were lined with Cuban Royal palms. On a bathing beach developed for the use of Japanese migrants at the foot of Kotobukiyama, or Mount Longevity<sup>65</sup> – a hill that sheltered the city from the northerlies of winter – palm groves were cultivated for decorative purposes and were marketed as tourist attractions. On the opposite side of the harbour in the (predominantly Chinese) district of Kigō, palms were chosen for a long line of windbreaks, and were reproduced on postcards and maps of the city. Palms were also planted alongside many of the city's public buildings.<sup>66</sup> This use of palm trees in the design of a rapidly expanding Takao has been noted by the late Lin Shuguang, a Kaohsiung-based journalist *cum* historian who spent his childhood in the city during the colonial era. Writing in 1994, Lin recalled how, as a school student in the 1930s, he was asked to compose an essay about his native city of Takao – he chose to write about palm trees, 'plants of which we in Kaohsiung and Pingtung<sup>67</sup> should be most proud', and flora which were for Lin, at least, most representative of the city's topography.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> The mountain earned its name from a visit that Emperor Hirohito made to it in 1923, during his days as Japan's Crown Prince. Hirohito visited Takao not long before his 22nd birthday (hence the reference to 'longevity').

<sup>66</sup> D. Zheng, *Kanjian lao Gaoxiong* (Looking at old Kaohsiung) (Kaohsiung, 2001), 112–13.

<sup>67</sup> Pingtung is a county that borders Takao/Kaohsiung.

<sup>68</sup> Lin's reminiscences about the palm trees of colonial Takao can be found in S. Lin, *Dagou suotan* (Trifling discussions about Takao) (Kaohsiung, 1994), 225–8.

The project to create a 'southern' landscape in Takao was envisioned as continuing well into the future. In 1936, influential officials and intellectuals within the city were considering ways in which Takao could be made even more 'southern' in the decades ahead. For example, in a collection edited by the Japanese theorist Katayama Sugao and entitled *A Treatise on the Design of Greater Takao*, it was postulated that the city would grow even larger and more 'southern' over the years to come, eventually becoming a tropical counterweight to the Manchurian port of Dairen in the empire's frozen North. Katayama and his contemporaries believed that Takao could be made into something of a tropical 'Utopia' (a word that appears frequently throughout the work), a city in which the art of 'tropical living' (*nettai seikatsu*) could be perfected. The use of tropical flora in various parts of the city to suit certain types of architecture and space was advocated. And the ways in which other 'southern' localities, such as Hong Kong, might provide blueprints for the design of an emerging Takao were examined. The heights of Mount Longevity might be transformed, for example, into a residential quarter for wealthy Japanese residents in the city, much as Victoria Peak had been in the British crown colony of Hong Kong.<sup>69</sup>

### Concluding thoughts

Like the Japanese empire itself, the idea of Takao as a tropical metropolis at the southern reaches of empire came to an abrupt end with the defeat of Japan in the Pacific War and Taiwan's subsequent change of sovereignty. Much of the city's infrastructure was destroyed by Allied bombing in the closing stages of the war. Ironically, Takao's strategic position translated into a level of wartime damage rarely matched by that visited upon other urban centres throughout Taiwan.<sup>70</sup> The arrival of Chiang Kai-shek and his Chinese legions a short time later saw many of the ideas and tangible effects of Japanese imperialism discredited, or else appropriated into new ideologies and narratives.

Yet even today, one can still view the urban remnants of Japanese imperialism and its 'southern advance' here. This city's palm-lined thoroughfares and vast harbour are merely the most visible elements of Taiwan's colonial past. And as one of the busiest container ports in the world today, it could well be argued that the continuing economic and strategic importance of Kaohsiung owes something to the colonial ideas that informed its design more than half a century ago.

<sup>69</sup> S. Katayama, *Dai Takao kensetsuron to shi no genzei* (The design of Greater Takao and current trends in the city) (Kaohsiung, 1936), 300. For a similar example of such writing, see Takao Shiyakusho, *Takauchi yōran* (An overview of Takao city) (Kaohsiung, 1934).

<sup>70</sup> J. Zhang, 'Erci dazhan Taiwan zaoshou zhanhai zhi yanjiu' (A study of the damage suffered by Taiwan during the Second World War), *Taiwan shi yanjiu*, 4, 1 (1999), 149–96.

In considering the history of Taiwan's second largest city, it is tempting to imagine that colonialism brought modernity, industry and trade to what was already an essentially tropical and 'southern' setting. And in examining the extent to which many of the symbols of 'the South' that developed within Japanese imperialism were applied to the streets of this city, one is left in little doubt that Takao's 'southernness' was of a Japanese making.

Yet ideologies can be made to fit the urban form as much as they shape it. There may have been nothing preordained about the palms that were made to line Takao's streets in the 1930s or the crown-style architecture that still typifies some of its public buildings. Yet equally, and as I hope to have shown, Takao's early colonial development was not strictly informed by the 'southern advance'. The ability of colonialism to reinvent the ways in which space and geography are imagined and depicted in the urban context becomes clear here. This city and its history remind us that the interrelationship between the pragmatic practice of city planning and the far more nebulous mythologies that develop within the broader project of imperialism are never as straightforward as they might seem. The interplay between the two involves a constant process of cross-referencing, negotiation and re-interpretation. Takao may not have been designed as the 'base of the southern advance', yet its geographic position on Taiwan's southern coast saw to it that a local governmental and colonial elite appropriated this ideology into the service of their city, reinventing Takao in the years following the First World War, and again in the lead up to the Pacific War.

Further studies of how colonial cities in other parts of the world were planned, built and later depicted will provide a clearer picture of the extent to which Takao/Kaohsiung's history is typical or anomalous.<sup>71</sup> Future research will also have to consider what colonial ideas and their influence on the shape of this city meant, above all, to its non-Japanese residents. In any case, and in the context of a growing scholarly interest in the urban history of the Japanese empire, the possibilities for further consideration of the history of locales such as Takao/Kaohsiung are substantial, and the potential contributions of such studies significant.

<sup>71</sup> At present, the Japanese empire and its 'southern advance' remain largely outside mainstream academic considerations of the history of 'the tropics' and its depictions. Reporting on the recent 'Tropical Views and Visions' Conference held at the National Maritime Museum in London, David Lowenthal notes of the papers presented: 'The perceivers were primarily European, the landscapes and peoples Indian, Pacific, Caribbean and Amazonian'. D. Lowenthal, 'Tropical views and visions: images of the tropical world, National Maritime Museum, 12–13 July 2002', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 29, 2 (2003), 275–6.