

Speaking Japanese

The spatial politics of local color provided new tools for representing the social divisions of the imperial nation as both complementary and naturally hierarchical. Colonial boosters, particularly those who resided in the colonies, used the language of cultural complementarity to argue for the inclusion of colonized territory into the space of the Japanese nation. For their part, imperial travelers accepted that the bottom rungs of the labor hierarchy would be filled with colonized subjects, whose “natural” aptitude for such work made the project of empire both rational and justified. At the same time, imperial travelers sought grounds upon which they could be said to share a political community with colonized subjects despite the geographic, historical, and cultural differences that separated them.

As imperial travelers went forth investigating colonized lands—the so-called new territories—and the future of their relationship with Japan, they also probed colonized subjects for their willingness and ability to become imperial subjects. The mechanism of this probe was the Japanese language, the one tool that imperial travelers wielded that could cut through volume after volume, article after article, travelogue after travelogue of “truths” about the Japanification of the new territories: *Do you understand Japanese?* Getting right to the heart of the question, imperial travelers questioned colonized subjects in Japanese and about Japanese, and they recorded these conversations as evidence of either the success of assimilation or the need to continue training and evaluating colonized subjects for membership in the nation.

That they chose language for this task is not surprising, given the pervasiveness of the ideology known as “linguistic nationalism” during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the late nineteenth century, Ueda Kazutoshi argued

that language was the lifeblood of the nation. The leader of the campaign to standardized spoken Japanese, Ueda famously articulated the link between the Japanese language and the “Japanese spirit” in 1894, when he argued that “the Japanese language is the spiritual blood of the Japanese people.”¹ During this time, the Governments General in Taiwan and Korea inaugurated intense Japanese-language education campaigns, intending to transform colonized subjects into Japanese people through linguistic conversion. In the metropole, the Ministry of Education waged a similar campaign against what it called “dialect” (*hōgen*). Schools around the country worked to transform the highly variegated everyday speech of the nation into a “national language” (*kokugo*). Despite national language advocates’ insistence on the essential unity of the Japanese-language speech community, the new “standard” primers for language education in the metropole, which appeared in 1903, proposed to teach the nation what was, in fact, a highly localized version of Japanese: Tokyo dialect.

In this moment of shifting expectations, no individual’s definition of “proper Japanese” was self-evident. Rather, speech itself was undergoing a process of definition and redefinition as powerful institutions, such as the Governments General, the Ministry of Education, associations of language teachers, and public intellectuals, linked speech to nation and therefore to one’s place in society. In the hands of imperial travelers, linguistic nationalism became the basis for a shifting landscape of inclusion and exclusion that operated in loose parallel with the vision of the empire as a division of labor and cultural regions. Imperial travelers agreed that certain peoples—like classes of laborers—were naturally suited to certain languages and registers (the degree of formality and kind of vocabulary that one uses depending on the social context), and only some could use language to transcend their place of origin. Yet unlike labor, imperial travelers did not treat language as an example of the logic of mutual benefit. A Taiwanese Chinese street peddler’s broken Japanese did not fulfill a particular function that allowed other speech communities to attend to complementary tasks. Rather, in their reactions to the Japanese-language speech of colonized subjects, imperial travelers produced a sense of the imperial nation as a community divided by intractable linguistic variation, which they read as a sign of the continued unfitnes of colonized subjects for full inclusion into the nation.

THE PLACE OF LANGUAGE

The idea that language and nation are coterminous, that nation comes from language and that nations are definable through language, is a form of language ideology rather than a historical truth. It would be hard to find a nation that meets the standards of national-language ideologues. Language is notoriously variable, with even the most codified of tongues open to internal debate over the “correct”

way to conjugate a verb, how to gender speech, and which registers are appropriate for different classes of people. For this reason, Michael Silverstein has argued that language is a metalinguistic category—a subjective matter of where boundaries between languages, dialects, creoles, and so on should be—rather than an objective description of what they are.³ Indeed, despite the self-evidence with which they drew the linkage between language and nation, more often than not, nineteenth- and twentieth-century linguistic nationalists found themselves confronting language as a problem to be solved rather than a reality to be embraced.³ During this era, as Hiraku Shimoda argues, speech diversity “was not a problem of function . . . rather, it was a problem of political psychology.”⁴ As national-language activist Ueda Kazutoshi saw it, the problem was not that people could not understand each other, but rather that they would not feel like a unified nation if they did not speak the same language. “Dialectism” threatened the unity of the nation, because “even though we are all Japanese, it is like meeting foreigners.”⁵

Like the landscapes of labor and scenery that constituted the touristic “local color” of Japan’s diverse cultural regions, imperial travelers and colonial boosters used language to place colonized lands and colonized peoples within the Japanese nation. Yet unlike those landscapes, the linguistic encounters that travelers recorded offered the possibility of immediate and transparent relations between themselves and colonized subjects, as well as the potential for provocation. Like visible landscapes, travelers constructed linguistic landscapes in ways that created a sense of place in accordance with their own ideological lenses.⁶ Early Japanese imperial travelers used Japanese-language encounters to place colonized subjects under the rubric of the geography of civilization. They imagined that the new territories were both already part of the national (linguistic) land and, at the same time, imagined that the recognizable differences of colonized subjects would soon disappear (if they hadn’t already) as they too became Japanese. Readily embracing the equation of language and nation, imperial travelers regularly recorded conversations with local residents as part of their travelogues. In Korea, where travelers encountered Korean students on the city trains, conversations provoked astonishment and optimism about the prospects of assimilation. Arakawa Seijirō, for example, believed that “the most difficult and important task” of colonial policy was “to harmonize the feelings of the natives and assimilate them as citizens.”⁷ On his 1918 trip, the speech of Korean common school students impressed him enough that he wrote about the encounter. After twenty or so Korean students boarded the train, the captain of Arakawa’s group brought one student over to share his opinion of Japan. Though Arakawa did not include the content of the student’s answers, he appeared pleased that he had answered “promptly and clearly,” presumably in Japanese (since no one in the group spoke Korean).⁸ The Hiroshima group expressed similarly positive feelings after an encounter with Korean students from Heijō Higher Common School. The Heijō students “spoke national

language just like a person from the inner territory,” one student reported.⁹ In fact, it appeared that the Korean students spoke it somewhat better than people from the metropole. As the other diarist noted, the Koreans’ “textbook Japanese was so good that when I was told, ‘Your Japanese is a little different,’ I broke into a bit of a cold sweat.”¹⁰

In Manchuria, Japanese language signified not assimilation, but an expansion of Japanese territory.¹¹ As the Hiroshima students reported, when they arrived in Dairen from Nanking, “after ten days of travel for us who had been in contact with the language and scenery of a foreign country, we were extremely happy and nostalgic to finally discover a city that centered on the Japanese language.”¹² Yet even in Manchuria, where Japanese-language education was not couched in terms of assimilation into national subjects, the use of Japanese by Chinese medical school students and service workers signified their integration into a Manchurian society dominated by Japanese institutions and aims. The Tokyo Number One Higher School students were impressed with the South Manchuria Railway Company’s hiring of Chinese streetcar conductors, for example. “They really thought this out,” one student wrote. The policy of having Chinese conductors in the first car would encourage both Chinese ridership and the spread of Japanese language, since the conductors were required to use Japanese.¹³ At a common school (*kōgakudō*), the students met Chinese students who, after only three years of training, could speak “surprising” Japanese. When the Tokyo students approached the school to ask permission to look around, a Chinese student responded politely in Japanese, inviting them in to speak with his teacher. The fluency of his speech prompted the diarist to note, “When he said that, he was basically Japanese.”¹⁴ Later, the Chinese students stood up and sang “Kimi ga yo,” the Japanese imperial anthem. “When I heard these spectacular little Chinese citizens (*Shina no chiisai kokumin*) rise up together and sing [Kimi ga yo],” he gushed, “I felt an indescribable feeling that was like breaking out in a cold sweat.”¹⁵

Encounters with Japanese-speaking colonized subjects produced a sense of the uncanny. Travelers’ responses were part celebration and part concern over what the linguistic aptitude of colonized subjects meant for their own place within the nation and the empire. Imperial travelers were particularly unnerved by the ability of indigenous people in Taiwan to speak Japanese. Travelers were clear in their expectation that indigenous people would not speak Japanese. Or, if they did, that they would clearly distinguish themselves from metropolitan Japanese (by speaking impolitely, inappropriately, or with an accent). In 1918, the painter Ishikawa Toraji captured these unarticulated expectations in “Taiwan ryokō” (Taiwan travel), his contribution to a volume entitled *Shin Nihon kenbutsu* (Sightseeing new Japan). Ishikawa reported speaking with several people, but the only people whose speech he commented on were the indigenous people he met in the Savage Territory. “I grabbed my sketchbook and walked here and there,” he wrote.

“Along the way, every male savage I met gripped his sword and greeted me with ‘hello’ (*konnichiwa*).” The encounter “was somehow uncanny.”¹⁶ The appearance of Japanese-speaking indigenous people and, moreover, *polite* Japanese-speaking indigenous people struck Ishikawa as strange and unsettling.

In many ways, the surprise that Ishikawa, Arakawa, and the Tokyo and Hiroshima students expressed is counterintuitive. From the historian’s vantage point, it is not at all surprising that many colonized subjects spoke excellent Japanese. Japanese-language education was the centerpiece of assimilation policy in Taiwan and Korea. In the words of E. Patricia Tsurumi, “Education, it was hoped, would secure the cooperation of the natives and perhaps eventually would even assimilate them. . . . Education was seen as an instrument of fundamental social, political, economic and cultural change; it was to transform a segment of traditional China [Taiwan] into an integral part of modern Japan.”¹⁷ Language theorists “firmly believed that the mastery of a language would lead to the construction of the personality associated with that language.”¹⁸ As one leading scholar of colonial language pedagogy claimed in 1904, “the knowledge, emotion, and quality of the nation, as well as the people’s activities and growth, all reside in the language.”¹⁹

To accomplish this goal of transforming colonized subjects into willing subjects of the Japanese nation, the Governments General in Taiwan and Korea invested an enormous sum into education, particularly the study of Japanese. Language education began in the first year of Japanese rule over Taiwan when Isawa Shūji, the acting chief of the Government General’s Bureau of Education, started a program of Japanese classes at Shisangyan, near Taihoku. A year later, there were fourteen “Japanese language institutes” in the new colony.²⁰ The near isomorphic relationship between “education” and “language education” continued throughout the early colonial period. In 1898, the Government General’s new Common School Regulations stipulated that the purpose of such an education was, first, to “give Taiwanese Chinese children a good command of Japanese language” and, second, to “teach them ethics and practical knowledge, in order to cultivate in them the qualities of Japanese national subjecthood (*kokumin taru no seikaku*).”²¹

Like their Taiwanese Chinese counterparts, indigenous people within and without the Savage Territory were encouraged to attend school to learn Japanese. In the plains areas, the Government General opened what were known as “Savage Common Schools” (*banjin kōgakkō*) in 1905.²² Inside the Savage Territory, the Government General established education centers for indigenous children in 1908 as part of a broader plan to claim the territory for the Japanese camphor industry.²³ These education centers differed from common schools in two important ways. One, they were operated by the Government General Police instead of the Bureau of Education. Two, their curricular offerings were far more basic than even the Savage Common Schools, which already used separate textbooks that emphasized “simple” skills, such as reading in *katakana* (rather than

Chinese characters, the language of literature and government) and learning to read only in colloquial, rather than literary, Japanese (*kōgotai*, not *bungotai*).²⁴ As late as 1927, students in education centers spent two-thirds of their instructional time on Japanese and “practical studies” (*jikka*), which meant farming (*nōgyō*), handicrafts (*shukō*), or sewing (*saihō*).²⁵ By 1934, there were over eight thousand indigenous children attending eighty-eight education centers, with at least one in every indigenous district.²⁶ Though linguistic discrimination and social inequality prevented these children from matriculating into the primary school system in high numbers (a point to which we will return to later in this chapter), many learned to speak Japanese fluently. A 1936 report by the Government General documented that the average rate of “national language diffusion” among indigenous people was around 30 percent, with the highest being the Tso people, of whom over 40 percent of males and nearly 22 percent of females spoke Japanese.²⁷

When Japan colonized Korea in 1910, the new Government General of Korea imported the common school system from Taiwan with the similar intention of transforming Koreans into Japanese subjects via language education. Though Tsurumi argues that the Korean and Taiwanese systems produced quite different results, for our purposes, the point lies in the similarity of intentions, which stemmed from the basic presumption that, to borrow again from the Government General of Taiwan, “the Japanese spirit rests in the Japanese language.” For this reason, from the perspective of assimilation policy, it was imperative that colonized subjects “put all effort into using as much Japanese as possible” and that the colonial governments provide the educational foundation for such a spiritual linguistic transformation.²⁸ By closing many private academies and coercing and otherwise incentivizing attendance at Government General schools, the colonial government in Korea enrolled nearly eighty-eight thousand pupils in over 450 common schools by 1918.²⁹

With this history in mind, one might expect Japanese fluency among colonized subjects to be so banal as to be not worthy of mention. And yet quite the opposite was the case. Ōyama Takeshi, an official in the Bureau of Colonization who traveled to Taiwan in 1924, was taken aback by the ability of indigenous people to speak perfect, polite Japanese. In his travelogue, Ōyama reported arriving at a station in southern Taiwan to find dozens of indigenous people, whom he called *seiban*, “raw savages,” standing outside the police building. He noted the otherworldliness of their appearance: colorful long cloths on the women, strange jewelry, and arms that were covered from wrist to shoulder in “savage tattoos.” Yet, to his surprise, “everyone understood Japanese.” “Isn’t your belt tight?” he asked. “No, it’s not a problem,” a smiling man answered. Ōyama noted their barefootedness. “Aren’t your feet hot?” he inquired. “No, they are not hot,” another answered. Ōyama thought of the men running through the jungle barefoot and asked, “Well,

don't you ever get cut and injured by thorns?" "Not very often," the man replied. "And anyway, if we do get injured, we get better within three days." Ōyama considered this last statement to be a thinly disguised sneer at the weakness of Japanese people (*naichijin*).³⁰ The man's fluent Japanese, which Ōyama reproduced in polite forms, illustrated for Ōyama the surprising success of colonial education. And yet the encounter also revealed the potential for language to become a new tool for attacking the legitimacy of colonial rule. Ōyama's interpretation of the man's remarks was perhaps colored by an earlier encounter he had had with Japanese teachers in Korea. There, Korean students had taken to demonstrating their fluency by asking, in perfect Japanese, "When will you let Korea become independent?"³¹ The content—that is, questions about independence and jibes at Japanese rule—was troubling. Yet the mode of delivery—polite, fluent Japanese—made it all the more troubling, for had not this been the goal of colonial policy in the first place?

SPEECH, LANGUAGE, NATION

In evaluating their fellow countrymen's Japanese, imperial travelers adopted the official posture of the Ministry of Education vis-à-vis the Japanese language, namely, that there was a *single* Japanese language that could be spoken either correctly or incorrectly. Prior to the 1890s, only the written form of Japanese, known as literary Japanese, *bungotai*, was taught in schools. Literary Japanese, a mix of Chinese characters and Japanese classical grammar, bore little relation to spoken Japanese, which varied dramatically by region. The differences between spoken Japanese in different parts of the islands were so great that Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the last shōgun, once remarked, "[I had] a terrible time in meeting with someone from Satsuma. No matter what he said, I could not understand him at all. . . . Higo people are almost as hard to make out as Satsuma people."³²

By the 1880s, a movement to reform written Japanese began to build strength. Seeking to use the new compulsory educational system to standardize literacy across all classes, the campaign sought to reform written Japanese so that it reflected a colloquial rather than literary form. Led by the minister of education, Mori Arinori, the movement published new Japanese-language textbooks for elementary schools that used the colloquial form.³³ The movement became official in 1903, when the Ministry of Education began issuing its own standard textbooks, including a primer written in colloquial Japanese. By this point, however, the movement to reform *written* Japanese had morphed into an even larger project to unify and standardize written *and* spoken Japanese so that, for the first time, writing reflected speech and vice versa. Thus, the 1903 textbook explicitly aimed to disseminate a "standard form of Japanese."³⁴ Yet, in an archipelago characterized by linguistic diversity rather than unity, what

version of Japanese speech would qualify as “standard” Japanese? The ministry adopted the Tokyo dialect as the basis for standard Japanese and the colloquial written form.

Speaking “standard Japanese” did not come naturally to most students in the metropole, many of whom were forced to wear “dialect tags” (*hōgen fuda*) as a punishment for slipping into their native tongue at school.³⁵ Yet this disconnect between Japanese subjects and their supposedly shared national language did little to trouble Japanese linguistic nationalists, who argued that the strength of the Japanese nation lay in its unified tongue. This was particularly true after the 1894–95 Sino-Japanese War, which—among linguists and nationalists—touched off jingoistic paeans to the unity of the Japanese language across classes and regions.³⁶ Some argued that the reliance on literary forms in written Chinese made China weak. The poet Inoue Tetsujirō, a member of the influential Association to Unify Speech and Writing (*Genbun itchi kai*), wrote in the *Yomiuri shinbun* (*Yomiuri newspaper*) in 1901: “the spoken and written languages are in the most incompatible state in Japan and China. . . . It is impossible, even for intelligent people, to express in written Chinese Western ideas such as logic, economics, and philosophy. . . . The Japanese writing system is far more advanced than that of the Chinese; the innovation of adding *kana* [characters representing syllables] to *kanji* [Chinese characters, which represent ideas] words contributed to the development and progress of the Japanese people. . . . [This was] one of the causes that brought the Japanese victory over the Chinese.”³⁷ Shiratori Naokichi, a founder of the field of “Oriental history” (*tōyōshi*) and prominent member of the Tokyo Imperial University faculty, argued that Japan had emerged as the leading power of Asia because of its linguistic independence. In contrast to Korea, “Japan had gradually liberated itself from the Chinese tradition and valued its own language and writing. . . . Every language shares its destiny, its rise and fall, with its nation. . . . Korea was heavily influenced, politically and culturally, by the Chinese race, and therefore was never able to gain its firm independence.”³⁸

The linguistic nationalism of the years after the Sino-Japanese War produced a particular language ideology among education officials and colonial planners that linked the creation of an ideal national people to the use of an ideal national language.³⁹ Paradoxically, this meant that all Japanese people had to learn what was ostensibly already the national language (*kokugo*). In the colonies, as embodied by educators like Isawa Shūji, the chief of the Bureau of Education in Taiwan, the national language campaign (*kokugo undō*) was stripped of its irony and put forth as a self-evident process of assimilating colonize subjects into an already existing Japanese nation and national language.

Wielded in the context of empire, language was a double-edged sword. Outside of the official and highly controlled domains of education and policy,

Japanese-language speech remained highly variable. Though the Hiroshima students equated the use of Japanese in Dairen as a sign of the cozy Japanese-ness of the foreign port city, they also found a comforting Japanese-ness in nonstandard forms of Japanese. At Tōkōshi (C. Tanggangzi) Hot Springs, the group stayed at the Seirinkan, a Japanese-style inn operated by Japanese settlers and managed, it seemed to the diarist, by their seven-year-old daughter, Atsuko. “Uncle, let’s go for a walk!” she said to him. The accent of her speech affected him, “She became even cuter as [her] Kyūshū accent (*namari*) mixed in with the beginning of each word.”⁴⁰ Staring out into the Manchurian plains at dusk, he found it hard to reconcile the severity of the landscape with the bell-like nature of the seven-year-old. “In truth, I never thought I’d spend such a beautiful night in the wastelands of Manchuria,” he sighed.⁴¹ Though Atsuko’s Japanese was nonstandard, the Hiroshima student nonetheless found it praiseworthy and comforting.

In their evaluation of Japanese-language speech in the colonies, imperial travelers deployed this common double standard: colonized subjects could demonstrate their ability and willingness to join the Japanese nation only by speaking national language properly; Japanese people, however, could demonstrate their authentic Japanese-ness by speaking it improperly. Students from the 1931 Miyakonojō Higher Commercial School trip fell over laughing when Mr. Yamada, a tour guide who also hailed from Miyazaki Prefecture, broke out in Miyakonojō dialect (*Miyakonojō kotoba*) as he introduced his lecture on the Manchurian silver market: “Since I came to Manchuria ten years ago, the hair on this head [indicating his own] has turned white, because I looked at the reports on the silver exchange in the newspaper every day and suffered until my head hurt. Everyone, please look at this head.”⁴² It was a little taste of home for the travelers—indeed, it was so local that the only reason I am able to include this translation is because the diarist himself provided a translation, knowing that his audience would not be able to make much sense of the dialect. Yet the Miyakonojō students were not as forgiving of other localized styles of Japanese speech. Encountering a group of Korean elementary school children on the train to Jinsen (K. Inch’ōn), the boys asked them questions while giving them candy. “Their Japanese was skillful,” the diarist reported, but “the majority of them couldn’t pronounce the voiced consonants (*dakuon*), so, for example, *densha* [train] became *tensha*, *gojuppun* [ten minutes] became *goshuppun*.” Worse: “Moreover, when they talked among themselves, they spoke in Korean (*Chōsen-go*).” While remarkably similar to his experience with Mr. Yamada, from such evidence, the student surmised that the Korean students had the potential to become good imperial subjects but were not there yet. “If they could pronounce the voiced consonants, and if they spoke Japanese even when speaking to their friends, there wouldn’t be better Japanese imperial subjects (*Nihon teikoku shinmin*) than these Koreans,” he concluded.⁴³

THE LOCAL COLOR OF LANGUAGE

Imperial travelers' representations of colonial speech show how language became a tool for envisioning the space of empire and nation as an unstable linguistic landscape. Imperial travelers expected people from certain places to speak in certain manners. When they did not, which was quite frequently, the travelers began to propose new landscapes, ones tied to their expectations that Japan was or should be a multiethnic imperial nation composed of essentially different ethnic groups who were indigenous to essentially different cultural regions.

Like the local color of cultural regions, the local color of language was a swirling mix of coercive and anticipatory expectations. In the colonies, language was governed by the coercive expectations of the Governments General and the South Manchuria Railway Company. These were official expectations with official consequences: one would speak national language in official settings, one would wear a Japanese-style school uniform to school, and one would treat colonial officials with respect. Imperial travelers brought their own expectations, however, anticipating certain manifestations of colonial difference, such as colonized subjects' inability to speak Japanese, strange customs, and questionable respect for colonial officials. In imperial travelogues, these rival expectations intersected, with travelers expressing surprise at how the colonies were not different in the way that they had expected, and with them then recalibrating how to define that difference. The local color of language was, in other words, another measure that, like mobility, tracked the shift from a geography of civilization, in which assimilation was the presumed goal and endpoint of colonial history, to a geography of cultural pluralism, in which cultural difference was not only expected but enforced. It was this latter notion of Japan as a nation of diverse cultural regions, each of which had its own authentic indigenous people, that imperial travelers deployed to paint a picture of an imperial nation that was both united and comfortably hierarchical.

For their part, colonial boosters promoted a straightforward version of language as local color. In the guidebooks and pamphlets that began appearing in the mid-1930s, colonial boosters depicted language and territory in an isomorphic relationship. Despite the aggressive national language campaigns that the Government General of Korea had enacted to stamp out the use of Korean in everyday life, for example, the 1934 *Chōsen ryokō annai ki* encouraged travelers to learn a few Korean phrases in order to interact more smoothly with locals. The phrase guide described Korean (using the term *Sengo*) as a local alternative within a territory governed by national language.⁴⁴ "While nowadays national language has spread to the degree that there is no place where one cannot communicate through national language, for the person who wants to understand Korea and the people of Korea, it is necessary to understand Korean. Even if you only memorize two or three words, you can create an extremely friendly environment."⁴⁵ The guidebook provided translations for "hello," "goodbye," "how much," and other

everyday phrases. The suggestion that communication between Japanese people and Koreans in Korea held value for both parties differed markedly from previous guidebooks, which insisted that travelers could and should use Japanese language with no difficulty. For example, a 1926 Korea-Manchuria Information Bureau guidebook claimed that, “as the mother tongue has spread throughout the land, travelers from the inner territory should not worry about being unable to communicate.”⁴⁶ By 1934, regardless of whether communication in Japanese was possible, the guidebook suggested that one make an attempt to use Korean anyway.

In Manchukuo, the Japan Tourist Bureau’s Dairen Branch and the South Manchuria Railway Company promoted the local color of storefront signage as a symbol of the region’s distinct linguistic culture. The bureau’s 1941 *Manshū kanban ōrai* (Manchurian sign travel) taught travelers how to read the Manchukuoan cityscape. The need for colorful signs, the guidebook explained, stemmed from the region’s historical high rate of illiteracy. In such a context, a colorful and distinctive signage had developed as a way to identify different shops and services. The small volume offered travelers a chance to see the region as distinctly Manchurian. “When you walk around picking out the signs, you forget the dirt, noise, and bitter thirteen-degree-below-zero cold,” the guidebook stated. “You are made to feel keenly the pleasure of Manchuria.”⁴⁷ Other guidebooks, such as the South Manchuria Railway Company’s 1935 *Minami Manshū tetsudō ryokō annai* also incorporated the signage prominently into their depictions of Manchuria. The inside cover of this edition of the railway’s guidebook showed sketches of various signs, which replaced the myriad transportation devices that had adorned the inside cover of the previous edition and the sketch of the steamer at Dairen wharf in the edition prior to that.⁴⁸

In these representations, language evoked a concept of the local defined by the history and practices of a particular speech community, not unlike the concept of authenticity-through-language that the ethnologist Yanagita Kunio proposed for Japanese.⁴⁹ Here, guidebooks defined speech communities by place (one spoke Korean in Korea), yet presented the affect of that speech community as accessible to outsiders if they joined it (even temporarily). In the colonial context, it is easy to read this representation of the local color of language as an ethno-racial rather than territorial division. In colonial Taiwan, for example, anthropologist Inō Kanori classified indigenous people into eight distinct “tribes” (*shuzoku*) based on language in the late 1890s.⁵⁰ Similarly, in post-1932 Manchukuo, language was one of a slippery cast of schemes for categorizing the state’s “five races,” which also included history, phenotype, religion, and nationality.⁵¹ Yet local language prescriptions in colonial tourist guidebooks appeared simultaneously with local language prescriptions in guidebooks for travel in the inner territory. Thus, as the Government General of Korea exhorted imperial travelers to speak Korean in Korea, the

Ministry of Railways gently suggested to metropolitan travelers that they try out Tōhoku dialect in Tōhoku, Kyūshū dialect in Kyūshū, Kinai dialect in Kyōto, and a little bit of Ainu in Hokkaidō.⁵² In these representations, language and ethnicity were not a one-to-one match—popular representations of Japanese ethnicity in the 1930s did not distinguish between Kyūshū and Kinai—whereas language did define a place, and a place, language.

In prescriptive tourist literature, the local color of language was thus a binary concept—the local language was either this or that. Korean or Japanese. Chinese or Korean. This dialect or that dialect. For imperial travelers, however, the reality of language use was far messier. They struggled to differentiate between people in ways that matched their expectation of both a spatial and ethnic differentiation of power and prestige within the empire.

The use of Japanese in the colonies provoked expressions of surprise and praise by imperial travelers. Visiting the Girls' Higher Common School in Keijō, Hayasaka Yoshio wrote that, "[Koreans'] power of memorization is really quite strong. What's more, in things like their power of language, there are places where Japanese people can't even compare."⁵³ Nagasawa Sokichi had a similar experience in eastern Taiwan, where, he wrote, "The savage children's pronunciation in the national language practicum was perfect."⁵⁴ Yet both travelers heard the Japanese spoken by colonized subjects within a relative rather than binary linguistic landscape. For Nagasawa and Hayasaka, rather than a single language that one either spoke or did not speak, "national language" contained degrees of competence. "Actually," Hayasaka continued, "their speech in Japanese and in English is clear and bright, and made me ashamed of our Tōhoku accent."⁵⁵ Nagasawa drew similar comparisons, arguing that the indigenous children's pronunciation was perfect and bore "absolutely no comparison to our Tōhoku people."⁵⁶

In his landmark analysis of the 1920s education system, historian Motoyama Yukihiko argued that scholars should approach Japanese education history as a story of capitalism. Previous historians had been inclined to emphasize the policy divisions between the Ministry of Education's incorporation of state ideology into the curriculum in the formative Meiji period (1868–1912) and the tentative "liberalization" of education in the Taishō years (1912–1926). In contrast, Motoyama suggested that the distinction between "state-centered" and "liberal" education was a false dichotomy. Rather, policies from both eras shared the goal of differentiating the population into elites, white-collar workers, and blue-collar laborers for the purposes of strengthening Japanese capitalism.⁵⁷ Language served a central role in promoting a division of labor within Japanese society. Kitamura Kae comes to a similar conclusion in her study of indigenous education in colonial Taiwan. Writing about the new guidelines for colonial education that appeared in 1927, which stated clearly that the purpose was to "develop Japanese citizens" (*Nihon kokumin*), she argues, "Just as the education center symbolized the maintenance of a separate

school system under Special Administration [of the “Savage Territory”], the multilayeredness that was established within the *kokumin* is clear. There were distinct differences in the reality of ‘the necessary character of a citizen’ that [students] were supposed to master.”⁵⁸

When Hayasaka and Nagasawa stated that the Japanese spoken by Koreans and indigenous people was far beyond that of the people of the region of Tōhoku in northeastern Japan, they located Korea and the indigenous areas of Taiwan within a division of language that closely mirrored the empire’s geographic division of labor. As a region, Tōhoku provided two basic contributions to the imperial economy: wage labor, in the form of workers who traveled to the urban manufacturing center, and material resources, such as rice and coal.⁵⁹ In a situation that elsewhere has been called “the development of underdevelopment,” the region provided essential resources for urban industrialization while its population lived with disproportionately fewer benefits from industrialization.⁶⁰ It was these disparities that led ethnographers such as Yanagita Kunio to the northeast in the 1930s to document what they saw as the last remnants of the authentic everyday life of the Japanese people being eroded by the uneven fits and starts of capitalism. In this light, Nagasawa’s and Hayasaka’s insistence that indigenous people and Koreans spoke Japanese better than the people of Tōhoku suggested not only that Koreans and indigenous people could be integrated into the imperial economy as labor but also—perhaps more important to travelers seeking to create a national space under the terms of the geography of civilization—that they would not necessarily be consigned to the bottom rungs of the labor hierarchy.

No matter how celebratory, however, imperial travelers’ accounts of spoken Japanese exhibited considerable anxiety about the place of Japanese-speaking colonized subjects in an imperial society. For Hayasaka and Nagasawa, this anxiety appeared as a concern about whether these Japanese-speaking students, whose pronunciation was flawless, were actually comprehending (*rikai*) the subjects that they studied. Hayasaka suspected that the Korean students’ ability to produce Japanese did not correspond to their ability to understand subjects in Japanese. “What about their comprehension?” he asked. Nagasawa, too, wondered if producing speech signified understanding. Responding to critics who suggested that indigenous people could not understand abstract subjects such as math, Nagasawa wrote, “Besides, their grades in math are also excellent.” For Nagasawa, this was all good news: “If you look [at the question of assimilation] from these good points, you can say that, of course, they are a people with the power of understanding (*rikai*).” Indeed, it placed indigenous people in a position above that of Taiwanese Chinese, who, in Nagasawa’s words, “have a mother country and can’t understand right or wrong.” “The savages,” he concluded, “have a simple character that should be loved [and] will be very easy to assimilate.” Meanwhile, in Korea, Hayasaka found that, though their skill in foreign language speech surpassed that

of Japanese, Korean students' comprehension lagged behind: "I found that [their comprehension] is not as we imagine it to be. In general, it seems as if [Korean students] excel at geography, history, and national language, but they are inferior in math and science."⁶¹

Students in the Hiroshima Higher Normal School group found a different, but still effective, method of turning the foreign-language proficiency of the Korean students they encountered into a way of marking Koreans as perpetually failing to measure up to the Japanese. Questioning their teacher about a sign outside the telegraph office in Heijō Station that stated that the office would not handle messages written in "mixed sentences" (Korean and Japanese), the student wondered why this was necessary. Was it because they used mixed sentences to include deceitful things? The student quoted the teacher's response: "Sure, I suppose that there are those things. But Koreans have an extremely high aptitude for learning foreign languages. After four years of common school, they have basically completed [learning Japanese], and after higher common school, they don't even use Korean and are completely free in their ability to speak Japanese." Drawing on the popular Japanese narrative of Korean history as marred by what Japanese commentators called "toadyism" (*jidai shisō*) (in contrast to Japan's supposed 2,600 years of unbroken imperial rule), the teacher enumerated two reasons for what he portrayed as Koreans' extraordinarily skill with language: one, the sounds in Korean are found in all other languages; two, historically, Koreans have always been speaking languages that were imposed by foreign countries.⁶²

The concern with comprehension in the classroom, as well as the use of comprehension as a method of belittling the achievements of impressively bi- or multilingual students, had, as its flipside, the praising of pronunciation and politeness. For imperial travelers, using the "national language" was both a skill and an affect. In the terms of sociolinguistics, imperial travelers made explicit metapragmatic statements about how they expected colonized subjects to speak Japanese, and they also expected colonized subjects to perform with an implicit metapragmatic awareness that signaled acquiescence or consent to a hierarchy of examiner and examined, interrogator and interrogated.⁶³

Consider politeness. In his 1922 account, Hayasaka reported the following conversation with two "beautiful Korean women" on the night train from Keijō to Hōten. The women, he discovered, were traveling to Heijō, where they attended the Heijō Girls' Higher Common School.

By the looks of their clothing, they were, without a doubt, educated women. In that case, I thought, they should also understand Japanese (*Nihongo*). Driven by curiosity, I asked, "Ladies, where are you headed?" The younger of the two responded with a smiling face, as if she were a little embarrassed, "We are going to Heijō." [Her] pronunciation was clear, and in no way inferior to [that of] a female student from Tokyo. . . . I asked, "What is your principal's name?" The woman said, "He is called

Mr. So-and-So.” (I forgot the name.) I asked, “Are the teachers from the inner territory nice to you?” The women, “Oh yes, everyone is kind and deeply compassionate.” I had always thought that colonial education would not work without kindness and compassion, and [her statement] coincided exactly with my opinion. . . . I said, “Well, it is time for us to go our separate ways. If my schedule allows, I might pay a visit to your school.” “Goodbye,” she said. It was somehow touching. Do female students in the inner territory have such an easy, gentle affect? Koreans (*Senjin*) are not a people whom we should hate. Through kindness and compassion, we must guide them to the level of civilization.⁶⁴

Hayasaka initiated the encounter using honorific forms of verbs and proper nouns, in this case the honorific *mairu* (to go) in place of *iku* and *kijo*, to refer to the women as “ladies” instead of “students” or “you two.” They conducted the remainder of the conversation in polite, upper-class Japanese. This was an explicit test on Hayasaka’s part. He was intrigued about their ability to comprehend (*wakaru*) Japanese, thus he spoke to them using a considerably polite and affected form of the language. The politeness of his inquiry to the female Korean students contrasted markedly with the language he used in other encounters, for example, with rickshaw pullers. “Hey, Mr. Rickshawman!” he reported calling out in Keijō, “Take me to the Higher Common School, will ya?” (*Oi, shayasan! Kōtō futsū gakkō made itte kuren ka*).⁶⁵ When several rickshaw pullers in a row refused to carry him up the hill to the school, Hayasaka declared the entire Korean population to be lazy and unfit for capitalist society. In this instance, however, he interpreted the women’s polite response to his polite inquiry as evidence that they comprehended the rules of Japanese-language speech and, indeed, that they had acquiesced to—if not actively desired—Japanese rule.

NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND THE ETHNO-LINGUISTIC DIVIDE

As these encounters demonstrate, imperial travelers drew the borders of the linguistic landscape in the terms of the geography of civilization—of an expanding space of the nation that already did incorporate the new territories and would soon incorporate their peoples. At the same time, like colonial boosters’ early tourist guidebooks, they found ways to mark colonized subjects as “not-quite” in place in this new linguistic space. To mitigate the threat of colonized subjects’ mastery of the national language, Hayasaka posited an imaginary of a future Japanese imperial nation that had divisions along class, ethnicity, and gender lines, lines that contradicted the official goal of national language policy and colonial education, which was to create a horizontal nation of national language speakers who shared a particular affect and “national spirit.” Politeness, the implied metapragmatic awareness that imperial travelers expected of colonized subjects, served to draw a

boundary between populations that appeared willing to assimilate and those that did not. But this boundary also differentiated between those populations that had to prove their willingness and those from whom no such demonstration was expected. Alongside the question of willingness was the question of ability, which, for Hayasaka and others, delineated populations capable of assimilating from those that, in travelers' determinations, were not.

The same year that Hayasaka traveled the empire to investigate the conditions of the colonies, the Governments General of Korea and Taiwan radically altered the structure of colonial education. Linguistic nationalism had, since Isawa Shūji arrived in Taiwan in 1898 to establish his Japanese language institutes, been the ideology underlying the colonial and metropolitan governments' emphasis on the dissemination of standard Japanese. Yet, in many ways, the maintenance of three different education systems undermined such an ideology by differentiating the nation based on class, gender, and ability in the metropole, and by race or ethnicity (as well as class, gender, and ability) in the colonies. The three educational systems were, first, the multitracked primary school system that culminated in university education, which was for social and academic elites in the metropole and for Japanese residents of the colonies; second, the single-track "common" school system for colonial subjects (*kō gakkō*) and nonelite metropolitan subjects (*jinjō gakkō*) that ended with higher common school and that did not share teachers or facilities with the primary school system; and third, the "educational centers for indigenous children," which were equally standalone and underfunded, and ended after only four years.

In 1922, the Governments General of Korea and Taiwan announced changes that would fully incorporate linguistic nationalism into the structure of colonial education by ending, in theory, the use of race and ethnicity to differentiate student populations. Following the emergence of vociferous assimilation, self-rule, and independence movements across the empire, the colonial administrations opted to liberalize colonial education in the hopes of incorporating dissenting groups into the imperial nation.⁶⁶ In 1922, Den Makoto, the governor general of Taiwan, presented the Rescript on Education, which declared that all schools would be open to both Taiwanese Chinese and Japanese children. Rather than require Taiwanese Chinese students to attend common school and Japanese students to attend primary school, the rescript declared common schools to be "institutions for non-Japanese-speaking children" and that primary schools would be for Japanese-speaking children "regardless of race."⁶⁷ Primary schools were opened to indigenous children as well, provided that they completed four years of education in an indigenous education center and could demonstrate considerable Japanese-language fluency.

Similarly, Saitō Makoto, the governor general of Korea, presented the Revised Korean Rescript on Education in 1922. In the words of one historian of Korean education, the rescript created a "separate but equal" system for Japanese and Korean

education by increasing the number of years of education provided by the common schools.⁶⁸ Yet here as well, the definition of “Korean” and “Japanese” bears close attention: as the research of Yeounsuk Lee has shown, the Revised Korean Rescript defined Japanese students (*naichijin*) as “those who always use national language” and Koreans (*Chōsenjin*) as “those who do *not* always use national language,” thus opening the door for a liberal interpretation of educational policy by allowing a small number of Korean national language users to matriculate into the Japanese system.⁶⁹

As it was for colonial boosters advocating “harmony” through the promotion of a multiethnic spatial imaginary of Japan, the stakes for colonized subjects attempting to matriculate into the colonial education system were high. As we saw in chapter 1, the Japanese education system was consciously designed to produce labor for industrial production as well as future leaders who would govern the nation-state. The majority of students completed their education after six years of compulsory elementary school. The metropolitan educational system was thus both meritocratic and explicitly elitist, designed as it was to divide the population into managers and workers.⁷⁰ In the colonies prior to the integration rescripts, the Governments General discarded meritocracy in favor of ethnic hierarchy, though they continued to espouse liberal rhetoric about the necessity of education for social advancement. In Taiwan, the Government General encouraged Taiwanese Chinese to enter the professional classes as either teachers or doctors. At the Taihoku Medical School or the Teachers’ College, elite Taiwanese Chinese students received training from Japanese instructors and licenses to practice on the island. Yet these schools remained the culmination of a distinctly inferior and circumscribed track when compared to that offered to Japanese students, who could rise through the primary, middle, and higher schools in Taiwan and then attend a university or specialty school (*senmon gakkō*) in the metropole.⁷¹ In contrast to the path made available to Taiwanese Chinese students in Taiwan, the path for Japanese students in Taiwan carried significantly increased options for professional specialization and access to university education, which was over the course of the early twentieth century an increasingly important prerequisite for membership in the new middle class and access to elite, metropolitan political, economic, and social networks.

The 1922 integration rescripts “intensified the contradiction between liberal culture and ethnic inequalities” in the education system, particularly in the fields that had been reserved for colonized subjects.⁷² In Taiwan, the integration rescripts made the previously Japanese-only primary schools open to Taiwanese Chinese students. Yet, as Ming-Cheng Lo has pointed out, it also made the previously Taiwanese Chinese-only medical school open to Japanese students. In Korea, a robust private education sector dampened somewhat the social effects of the discriminatory public education system. Yet, in Korea too, Japanese students used the edict to enroll in the best of the formerly Korean-only institutions, thus further mar-

ginalizing Korean students in the public education system.⁷³ While the integration edicts ostensibly removed official practices of ethnic discrimination from colonial education, in practice, they introduced far more pernicious methods of unofficial discrimination. For example, Japanese students entering medical college after five years of preparatory education did not have to take an entrance exam. Yet, after initially ruling that Taiwanese Chinese students would also be exempt, the Taihoku Medical School reinstated entrance exams for them.⁷⁴ While these exams covered many topics, the language of the integration edicts provided the measure by which any non-Japanese applicant could be excluded, regardless of their technical competence in a given subject: fluency in the Japanese language. For this reason, E. Patricia Tsurumi argues that, after the integration edicts, language became the locus of discrimination within the colonial education system.⁷⁵ After the integration edicts, those who used Japanese in everyday life could to go “Japanese” schools. In practice, however, “Taiwanese [Chinese] pupils who participated in this form of coeducation never exceeded one percent of those Taiwanese [Chinese] who received elementary education.”⁷⁶ Contrary to the stated intention of its promoters, the integration edicts altered (rather than eliminated) the mechanism of ethnic and racial discrimination in education by creating a situation in which linguistic competence needed to be evaluated prior to inclusion. These evaluations were differentially applied: “Japanese language backwardness” was routinely used as a reason to limit the matriculation of Taiwanese Chinese students into primary schools, despite the fact that a secret 1923 study by the Government General of Taiwan showed that Taiwanese Chinese students were performing at or above the level of their Japanese counterparts.⁷⁷

Among imperial travelers, language encounters in the post-integration empire reinforced the new ethno-linguistic hierarchy. Rather than represent Japanese-speaking colonized subjects as evidence of the promise of assimilation or as flawed but capable future imperial subjects, imperial travelers enhanced their attention to the “appropriateness” of colonial speech. Though the 1930s have been described as a time when the “vulgar” racism of the early colonial period was discarded in favor of a more “polite” racism,⁷⁸ imperial travelers used expectations based on race, ethnicity, and gender to define the boundaries and hierarchies of the imperial nation more explicitly than before.⁷⁹ This was particularly true for travelers to Taiwan, who continued to be surprised and fascinated by Japanese-language encounters with indigenous people, yet also troubled by the potential consequences of such linguistic competence.

To be sure, imperial travelers did not see themselves as doing anything to language or to the linguistic landscape. Rather, they used conversations with colonized subjects as a way of emphasizing their own authority as first-hand witnesses to colonial conditions. In contrast to prescriptive materials, which adopted the voice of the omniscient third-person, imperial travelers represented their travelogues as a series of “I statements” that documented the traveler’s lived experiences.

No experience was more immediate—and more unavailable to nontravelers—than actual conversations with colonized subjects *in* the colony itself. In other words, for imperial travelers, reporting speech in the form of direct quotations was one of the most valuable ways of representing the entire narrative as both authoritative and uniquely informative.

In these representations of dialogue, imperial travelers engaged in content policing and promoted theories of ethnic opacity that incorporated essentialized ethnic boundaries into the linguistic landscape of empire. The policing of what colonized subjects should or should not say had as much to do with imperial travelers' expectations of whether colonized subjects could (or should) transcend their place of origin and the cultural characteristics travelers ascribed to it as it did with more explicitly political subject matters, such as the question of independence. Ōyama, as we recall, flinched when he heard Korean students using their national language skills to ask when Korea would become independent. Yet imperial travelers had strong expectations more broadly about the kinds of statements colonized subjects should or should not make. Matsuda Kiichi, a middle-school student from Osaka who traveled to Okinawa and Taiwan in 1937, had two entirely different reactions to the Japanese-language speech of indigenous peoples. At Kenbō Shrine in Taihoku, Matsuda encountered an indigenous man paying his respects to the dead. Quoting the man directly, he wrote, "The savage prayed and then expressed the following words, 'Kenbō Shrine is the place where those who have worked and died for the emperor are celebrated. I always knew that members of one of our tribes who worked and died for Japan during the Musha Incident were also celebrated here. But, I had not imagined it would be this magnificent of a shrine. I suppose our tribe must be very satisfied that they are celebrated in such a magnificent place.'"⁸⁰

Somewhat surprisingly (to this historian), this statement elicited no further comment from Matsuda. Rendered in polite but not honorific forms, the statement demonstrated considerable linguistic and cultural fluency on the part of its speaker. Perhaps this form of competence and this register of imperial subjectivity were now in the realm of the expected for Matsuda.

Later, however, Matsuda represented indigenous speech entirely differently on a visit Taroko Gorge in eastern Taiwan. In the words of the popular song "Taroko bushi" (Taroko melody), Taroko was the home of friendly Taroko maidens:

Taiwan's Taroko, what is its specialty?
 Gold sand, gourds, Taroko paper, paulownia sandals of plums and
 silk floss,
 a Taroko maiden's "hello"⁸¹

The image is similar to what Hayasaka conjured with his conversation with the "beautiful Korean women" on the train to Heijō: politeness and deference to the

terms of Japanese rule through the proper use of Japanese language. Well known for its scenic beauty (Taroko would become one of Taiwan's three national parks the following year), Taroko increasingly attracted imperial travelers in the 1930s. Yet Matsuda objected when indigenous people stepped outside of their defined role as part of the scenery. Arriving at Taroko, two "savages" (*banjin*) offered to take a photo with him for ten *sen* each. Matsuda found this both exciting and troubling. "On the one hand, I felt very happy to find that savages also understand the value of money. They don't have tattoos, and they are wearing *yukata* and red *obi*—they are just like Japanese (*naichijin*)!" Similar to other imperial travelers, Matsuda thought the logic of capitalism to be foreign to colonized subjects and particularly to indigenous people, who were thought to not understand how money worked. The men's request for money might, Matsuda suggested, mean that they were now Japanese. But he quickly found a way to reinscribe difference as ethno-racial rather than linguistic: "But the threateningness of their eyes and their black faces are parts that just can't be disputed."⁸²

Like Matsuda, imperial travelers often paired expectations about the content of speech with expectations about the nature of difference within a multiethnic nation. For Matsuda, faced with indigenous people speaking in a Japanese register, language could (suddenly) no longer overcome race. Other imperial travelers similarly reified ethno-racial difference by conceiving of language as a bridge between distinct peoples rather than as the manifestation of a national spirit. For these travelers, speech served as a conduit yet did not reveal the internal essence of the speaker. Travelers imagined that, with or without Japanese-language speech, Koreans, Taiwanese, Chinese, and especially indigenous people could not be known.

Whereas indigenous minds were once expected to be incoherent ("they speak!"), by the 1930s, imperial travelers expected fluency. Yet this fluency did not signify, as it had previously, the incorporation or inclusion of indigenous people within the Japanese nation. Language training did not make them Japanese. Instead, language training moved the definition of what Japanese was. By the 1930s, colonial officials in Taiwan treated Japanese-language speech by indigenous people as a performance of a bridge between two immutably different peoples. As Savage Manager (*ribanka*) Suzuki Tadashi explained in 1932, the purpose of national language education was to create a shared language that made clear the "shared consciousness" of Japanese and indigenous people, but which also fostered "close friendship" between the two peoples.⁸³ The first half of the sentence implied the possibility of a Japanese nation and national spirit that fully incorporated indigenous people. Yet the second half of the sentence undermined the first, representing the two peoples as essentially different.

The utility of language went both ways. In a report on its publication of training materials for "savage language" (*bango*), the Taihoku Prefectural Department of Savage Management noted the recent rise in the use of native languages by savage

managers. While the increase in communication was a positive trend, the department insisted that savage managers persist in setting the expectation that national language would be used at all times.⁸⁴ Language education was not for the purpose of increasing communication per se. Rather, national language education made possible the performance that Japanese travelers and colonial officials expected of indigenous people in order to prove what—it was presumed—could not be proved by sight alone: their submission to the power and norms of Japanese rule.

The “troubled, ill-defined” boundary between full and differential inclusion, between unselfconscious access and precarious performance, was precisely the expectation that indigenous people had to prove their fitness for inclusion.⁸⁵ But, as we see from the shifting expectations that both imperial travelers and the colonial governments applied to the Japanese-language speech of colonized subjects, this was an impossible task. If under the geography of civilization, the measure was pronunciation, comprehension, and the performance of obedience, under the geography of cultural pluralism, imperial travelers introduced explicitly racialized expectations that marked colonized subjects as unable to speak Japanese “like a Japanese person” even as they carried on conversations with colonized subjects in perfect Japanese. The expectation of difference became the imposition of difference.

SILENCE, VIOLENCE, AND THE OPAQUE MIND

Under the geography of cultural pluralism, colonial boosters, imperial travelers, and even colonial policy styled language as a bridge that brought people together into a community of shared consciousness. But it did so by first constituting them as worlds apart. Linguistic anthropologists argue that the idea that other minds are “opaque” is a form of language ideology prevalent in local, non-Western communities. Indeed, the “opacity of other minds” is often treated as a cultural clash between a Western language ideology in which speech is a transparent reflection of intention (speech as equivalent to intention) and particular or local language ideologies that assume the impossibility of knowing what is going on in somebody else’s head, regardless of what they say.⁸⁶ What is abundantly clear from the treatment of colonial Japanese-language speech is that Japanese colonial boosters and imperial travelers styled their speech as transparent in opposition to the opacity of the colonized. To rephrase the dichotomy, self-styled modern cultures have ideas about the distinct difference of Others, the first and foremost of which is the inability of language to make clear their intentions.⁸⁷

The inscrutability of indigenous people appeared in imperial travelers’ accounts of Taiwan as a fear of silence and expectation of violence. In the early years of colonialism, travelers portrayed Japanese-language greetings as a signal of safety. Ishikawa, for example, noted that the indigenous men who greeted him did so

while gripping their “savage swords.” Yet after being greeted with a polite hello, he relaxed and marveled at the bright future of colonialism and assimilation. Twenty years later, however, speech could not erase the fear of violence. “While it’s to be expected that savage women and children will be polite,” Matsuda Kiichi wrote after an encounter with a mother and child, “when you meet a savage man in his prime, you wonder, will he just not greet me or will he also pierce my body [with his sword]?”⁸⁸ Silence engendered a panic in Itagaki Hōki’s account too. Writing in 1931, he used the silence of indigenous people to signify danger. Stopped in the car on their way to the town of Keishū (C. Xizhou), Itagaki asked the driver why they were stopped.

When I asked the [Taiwanese] malaria assistant (*mararia joshu*), he avoided an explanation with frighteningly simple Japanese:

“Connection. Connection.”

The sun was blazing down, and it was very hot, so we settled into the middle of the car. As soon as we did so, a person peered into the car. We looked up: it was a savage. And not just one, but three or four, each doing his own painstaking investigation. I felt chills on my neck, as if our necks were being evaluated for head-hunting, just as the books on head-hunting said.

“Connection. Connection.”

What was the malaria assistant thinking?⁸⁹

In the end, Itagaki discovered that the assistant had stopped the car in order to transfer Itagaki and his wife to a different one, hence his statement of “connection, connection” (*renraku renraku*). But the other car had not arrived before a group of indigenous men arrived and examined the car’s inhabitants, leading Itagaki to wonder, “How long will we be pilloried for the savages?”⁹⁰

The fear that Matsuda and Itagaki expressed was, in part, a response to an unexpected, violent, and widely reported anti-Japanese uprising in the village of Musha (C. Wushe) on October 27, 1930. On this day, a group of Atayal tribe members killed 134 Japanese officials and residents. Prior to the incident, Musha had been known as a model, “tamed” village. As one Government General of Taiwan publication put it in 1925, Musha offered an experience of the “magnificent beauty” of the savage world, “bathed in the atmosphere of the savage highlands.”⁹¹ After the Musha Incident (*Musha jiken*), however, Musha became a site of uncanny silence. The actual village was destroyed, and its remaining residents were moved to a neighboring village. Tourist literature portrayed the Japanese-language voices of the village’s past inhabitants as ghostly sounds, whose comprehensibility was shattered by the unexpected violence. The 1935 *Taiwan tetsudō ryokō annai* described the village before the incident as occupying an important position in Taiwan’s “savage management” system, economy, and transportation network—a place where Japanese, islanders, and indigenous people lived together and where

indigenous children “happily puppeted national language and sang ‘Kimi ga yo’ [the imperial anthem].”⁹²

But to use the Musha Incident to divide the history of colonial Taiwan into two periods, one in which imperial travelers believed assimilation possible and one in which they recognized its futility, suggests the truth of the inscrutability thesis—that the actual inscrutability of the indigenous was just waiting to be discovered by the Japanese. Instead, it is far more accurate to point out that there had been violence between indigenous communities and the colonial government throughout the colonial period (much of it instigated by the colonial government). Moreover, as the comments by early Japanese travelers such as Ishikawa indicate, the idea that indigenous people were violent people, and in particular of indigenous people as “head-hunters,” had been a central component of colonial discourse since the initial colonization of Taiwan.⁹³ What we see in post-1930 accounts of linguistic encounters is not the recognition of an extant opacity made apparent by sudden violence. Rather, we see the construction of a narrative of inscrutability, with the Musha Incident as its central evidence.

Tourist guidebooks and imperial travelers treated the Musha Incident as evidence of the impossibility that indigenous people could ever be fully incorporated into the Japanese nation. As the 1935 guidebook explained, Musha had been a place of Japanese-language conversation and interaction. But in the end, speech was not enough to prove the loyalty of the indigenous community. The guidebook assured travelers that the colonial government had exacted swift and overwhelming retribution to reassert Japanese authority. Following the uprising, the colonial government killed over one hundred Atayal people and removed nearly three hundred “submissive” indigenous people to a neighboring village.⁹⁴ For Nakanishi Inosuke, the village became a place of silence. He cut off sound by placing a transparent barrier between himself and indigenous people in a conversation with his travel companion:

Musha! [. . .]

“I’d like to see it one time. Are there still savages from that time alive?”

“I think so. Over that mountain . . . in place called Kawanakashima. . . .”

When the car passed by Hori [C. Puli], the figures of savages were visible through the car window.⁹⁵

After Musha, imperial travelers routinely incorporated the idea that language signified transformation. But it was only a partial one, which could not fully overcome ancestry. Chōnan Kuranosuke, a member of the All-Japan Geography and History Teachers’ Association who traveled with the group to Taiwan in 1932, brought this lens to bear on his encounter with indigenous students in Kappanzan, a popular stop for travelers to Taiwan. The group witnessed a special Japanese-language class. “If you listen to their speaking, they speak in fluent



FIGURE 12. School for indigenous children at Kappanzan, c. early 1930s. The students' clothing and haircuts emphasized their Japanification, in contrast to other representations, which exoticized the customary dress and tattoo practices of Taiwan's indigenous peoples. Schools were a central component of the imperial tourist circuit for Taiwan and a key site where imperial travelers would engage indigenous peoples in Japanese-language conversations. Digital image courtesy of East Asia Image Collection, Lafayette College Libraries, Easton, PA. Image ip1532.

standard Japanese (*hyōjungo*) with the correct pronunciation and no bad habits, not even an accent," he wrote.⁹⁶ The students carried the travelers' bags like they were their uncles. "It was cute!" he exclaimed.⁹⁷ For Chōnan, the enthusiastic and proper speech of the children signified their willingness to be part of the imperial nation. Yet it was an inclusion that was incomplete, as he also insisted on seeing the children as representatives of a local ethnic group first and as Japanese second: "You wouldn't believe that they were the children and grandchildren of the fierce and bloodthirsty Atayal tribe that we heard so much about."⁹⁸

CONCLUSION

Like local color, imperial travelers used language to put colonized peoples and their lands *in place* within a multiethnic and complementary Japanese nation. Imperial travelers used reports of their conversations with colonized subjects to represent the empire as a linguistic landscape. The landscape's borders were drawn along the lines of class, place, gender, ethnicity, and race. Increasingly, as the linguistic nationalism of the early imperial period gave way to a feeble multilingualism,

imperial travelers drew the boundaries along racial and ethnic lines that drew more from their expectations about how people from particular places should speak rather than how they did speak.

In these accounts, the Japanese language was supposedly the glue that would bind the empire's disparate populations into a single nation. But speaking the language was a marker of inclusion that colonized subjects could never achieve. Rather, in the face of colonial fluency, imperial travelers differentiated language into, in the words of Osa Shizue, "both a culture and a skill."⁹⁹ Imperial travelers used the concepts of "proper" speech, content policing, and ethno-linguistic opacity to create a new hierarchy of imperial culture that situated imperial travelers as the examiners of linguistic skill and appropriateness, and colonized subjects as the examined. Imperial travelers placed colonized subjects in the category of the perpetually "not-quite" as "perfect speech" increasingly became an accomplishment that could be obtained only through study in the sterile linguistic environment of classroom, while Japanese people from the metropole demonstrated their authenticity through the deployment of dialect and jargon. Even if perfect Japanese speech was attained, it marked colonized subjects as colonial.

Local color and local language offered a distinctly pluralistic rather than genuinely multicultural vision of empire. Both sought to place colonized land, peoples, and cultures within imperial society without upsetting the fundamental basis for imperial rule, that is, the disenfranchisement of one political society at the hands of another.¹⁰⁰ They did this by treating culture as fixed and territorial and people as scenery; by defining certain peoples and cultures by locality, and others (the more powerful) by their mobility; and by representing language as a performance of political submission and a bridge between fundamentally different communities. The result was a new map of empire, one whose borders were drawn not along the lines of inner and outer territory, but along the intertwined axes of region, class, and ethnicity. It was also one from which, no matter how fluid, imperial travelers did not allow their objects to escape. While the categories they used to draw the maps changed over time, the fact that the map was drawn unilaterally and used in service of a narrative of imperial nationalism did not.