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Road to the Pacific War: The Failure of Gaimusho China Service Diplomats

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Barbara Brooks, currently assistant professor in the Department of History at City College, City University of New York, is a graduate of Princeton University, where she studied with Marius Jansen. She was also a researcher affiliated with Tokyo University's Department of International Relations (1982-1986 and 1991-1993) and states (p. ix) that the idea for this study came from Kurihara Ken, the senior scholar of the Gaimusho (Japanese Foreign Ministry). In this assessment, she has prepared a chronological assessment of the history of the Gaimusho from 1895 to 1938, but she warns (p. 10) that this is not a comprehensive history because she focuses on China service diplomats. Brooks employs a variety of primary sources, including the extensive Japanese Foreign Ministry Archives (JFMA), diaries and memoirs, and other unpublished materials, in addition to four interviews conducted in 1984 and 1985, and the reproductions of unpublished speeches. The book has 680 endnotes (pp. 215-261), 4 tables, 4 photos, and a bibliography with 347 published sources, the most recent from 1998. She benefits from the prolific writings, particularly diaries, of middle ranking officials who documented their jobs and the events of this era. A detailed 16-page double-column index of predominantly proper nouns is an important ad-

unct to this volume.

This carefully researched and well-documented account is an unparalleled assessment of Japanese policies toward China during the prewar period, and illustrates the declining power of the Gaimusho bureaucracy to manage Japanese affairs in China and the corresponding increasing strength of Japanese military power and other agencies over decisions regarding Japanese actions in China. The major contribution that Brooks makes is to examine the background of this dynamic phenomenon and the institutional history of the Gaimusho over a period of over 40 years and, rather than emphasizing the writings of leading diplomats and elite government officials, she employs original (often new or recently released) documents to elucidate the careers and experiences of middle and lower-ranked China service diplomats. These sources show incontrovertibly that there was internal resistance and dissent regarding Japan's policies in China and that the creation of the Daihoni (Supreme Command) by Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro strengthened considerably the military's role in Chinese affairs. This casts new light on the early phases of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Her highly original analysis clearly conveys that a majority of China specialists, including both diplomats and consular officials, were frequently outraged by the actions of the Japanese militarists and even the consular police. Certainly there was not the unanimity in the Japanese bureaucracy that some western scholars perceive, and, indeed, there were serious and divisive internal politics

among competing Japanese bureaucracies in China and in Japan. Ultimately, senior policy makers and diplomats were persuaded to expand the occupation of Chinese territory and escalate the war in China. By necessity, Brooks's research took her into the archives of the Gaimusho (Japanese Foreign Ministry), Ko-Ain (Asia Development Board), and To-Akyoku (Bureau of Asiatic Affairs).

In my assessment of this volume, I shall initially consider the content of the individual chapters and then provide a final analysis.

The "Introduction" (pp. 1-14, 30 endnotes) provides a clear and concise background to the study and the characteristics of the Japanese Foreign Ministry during this period. Brooks reminds the reader that the central role of the bureaucracy in Japanese politics under the Meiji Constitution has received extensive scholarly attention, including the period into the 1930s. However, the transformation of these bureaucracies has received lesser attention, particularly when examined from the perspectives of lower level bureaucrats rather than from global perspectives or upper level bureaucratic and diplomatic perspectives. Hence, domestic political constraints shed light on Japan's path leading to the Pacific War.

The Gaimusho was developed as a Japanese variation of a model of diplomatic bureaucracy borrowed from the West; nevertheless it maintained a distinct Japanese character, including professionalism, collegial ties, and the integrated administration of its jurisdictions both at home and abroad. Brooks also notes that the work of the Gaimusho during the interwar period was seemingly more imperialistic (the term "informal empire" is used) than diplomatic – the near colonization of China mitigated by the creation of the treaty port system. She focuses on the China service diplomats who initially negotiated Japan's interests in China's treaty ports and who played roles in decision-making in Kasumigaseki diplomacy in the aftermath of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 7 July 1937.

The author also analyzes the China service diplomats in the context of the Anglo-American diplomats of the 1920s as well as Anglo-oriented fellow Japanese diplomats and Axis-oriented Japanese diplomats of the 1930s. The illegal occupation of Manchuria by the Japanese Army in 1931-1932 was not opposed by mainstream diplomats such as Shidehara Kijuro much to the dismay of rank and file diplomats. Brooks then summarizes the content of her treatise.

In "Chapter 1: The Rise of Kasumigaseki Diplomacy: The Struggle for Autonomy" (pp. 15-44, 1 table, 98 endnotes) Brooks considers the early institutional development of the Gaimusho beginning with the Meiji period and the ways in which the Foreign Ministry maintained its independence. She introduces the organization of Kasumigaseki diplomacy in terms of early bureaucrats, the internal organization of the Foreign Ministry, and China policies in the period ca. 1910 to 1920. Two developments influenced development of the Gaimusho: 1) the formation and eventual disbanding of the Advisory Council on Foreign Relations, a board attached to the Prime Minister's office that administered Japanese foreign affairs from 1917 to 1922; and 2) the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, when younger diplomats for the Gaimusho were embarrassed and outraged at their ministry's inadequate performance at the conference. Petitions for reform were circulated and these young bureaucrats sought policy revisions. Brooks reviews the effectiveness of the Japanese delegation at Versailles, the Gaimusho rank and file at Versailles, the Gaimusho reform movement, and the results in the aftermath of Versailles.

A most enlightening "Chapter 2: The Development of the Career Diplomat: Nurturing China Expertise" (pp. 45-78, 3 tables, 1 illustration, 101 endnotes) provides the reader with essential background on the Gaimusho as a professional bureaucracy, especially the recruitment and personnel system. We are informed that the Gaimusho did not deploy its China experts very effectively in China because of a dominance of Tokyo Imperial University graduates within the ministry, and negative perceptions of the ministry held by diplomats who had prior experience in China. Interest groups and mixed perceptions about China service personnel are reviewed, and Brooks also relates how non-career personnel were recruited to the career level and the nature of the career track. Using extracts from memoirs and diaries, she next profiles a series of China service diplomats over three decades – the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. These were the diplomats who were ultimately responsible for the implementation of Japanese policy in the Chinese treaty ports. Brooks concludes that there was a developing consensus among these men that Japan must extend diplomatic recognition and support to the Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) Nationalist Chinese government.

The author provides us with a valuable summary of consular duties and obligations in "Chapter 3: The Japanese Consul in China" (pp. 79-116, 1 illustration, 131 endnotes). The Japanese followed the imperial system established by Western powers by creating an "informal

empire” in China. Brooks describes in detail the job of consul who, among many other duties, served as chief investigative lawyer, judge, jailer or warden, and police chief in Japanese civil and criminal cases. Consuls also managed the association that maintained the Japanese community, oversaw the planning and control of communal building projects, negotiated with Chinese authorities, and compiled detailed economic reports on commercial activities. As the head of the consular police, the consul was also charged with the rehabilitation of criminals, Koreans as well as Japanese. Japanese expansion in Manchuria extended consular duties to include the adjudication of disputes over leased farmland and the supervision of an even larger constabulary to maintain order. The Gaimusho’s critics pressed for the occupation of more territory in China, and Japan would extend its empire with the creation of Manchukuo. There are informative essays on the relationships of the consul and resident Japanese, Taiwanese, and Koreans.

With “Chapter 4: The Gaimusho’s Loss in the Manchurian Incident” (pp. 117-159, 2 illustrations, 134 endnotes) Brooks focuses on the Foreign Ministry’s struggle to maintain an unrestricted consular role in Manchuria against competing Japanese agencies. The latter included the Kanto Army, the Kanto and Korean Governments-General, and the Southern Manchurian Railway. This disunity of Japanese jurisdiction in Manchuria is documented for the period 1905 through 1928, and she then turns to Consul-General Hayashi Kyujiro and problems of jurisdiction during the period 1928 to 1931 in Fengtian.

Lists of rules (pp. 131-134) and specific cases of conflicts between the overlapping jurisdictions and competing agencies are reported and Brooks assesses the concept that the office of an impartial “High Commissioner” be created to unify Japanese administration in Manchuria. This did not occur and, in Hayashi’s opinion, the Manchurian Incident was the logical outcome. As a result the Japanese army extended its control and by 1932 a new capital was firmly established at Xinjing (Chungchun). Brooks documents the consul’s role in the incident and the Gaimusho’s responses to the Army’s move north, as well as the signing of the Manchukuo-Japan Protocol, 15 September 1932. In 1934 the creation of the Manchurian Affairs Bureau and the closure of all consulates in 1937 are also reviewed.

“Chapter 5: The Path to War: The Gaimusho’s Continuing Loss of Control in China Affairs” (pp. 160-207, 181 endnotes) begins with a review of the Manchurian In-

cident and Gaimusho reform bureaucrats, attacks on and by reform bureaucrats, and declining Gaimusho prestige. The failure of the Foreign Ministry to maintain peaceful relations with Nationalist China in 1937 and 1938 was seen as a failure by the Japanese people, the military, and other government bureaucracies. In this complex chapter, the author evaluates the contributions of revisionist bureaucrats to the demise of the Gaimusho, the struggles of China service diplomats in the To-Akyoku (Bureau of Asiatic Affairs), and modifications in the internal structure of the Foreign Ministry.

For this chapter Brooks relies heavily upon the perspectives of Ishii Itaro, head of the Bureau of Asiatic Affairs from 1937 to late 1938, who contends that falling prestige and inadequate leadership in the Foreign Ministry coupled with the growing strength of military influence, spelled the end of the Gaimusho. Ishii’s relationships with Foreign Minister Sato and Foreign Minister Hirota, and the outbreak of the China War are also documented. In addition, the Ishii Itaro and Ugaki Kazushige relationship and negotiations with Jiang Jieshi are reviewed. With the establishment of the Ko-Ain (Asia Development Board) that would handle China affairs based upon an ideology of occupation, the Gaimusho was rendered ineffective. Lastly, Brooks considers Horiuchi Tateki and the waning of the To-Akyoku (Bureau of Asiatic Affairs).

In the “Conclusion” (pp. 208-213, 5 endnotes) Brooks presents a clear narrative of the antiexpansionist efforts of important China service diplomats and documents the dilemma of being agents of Japanese imperialism on one hand and sympathetic to Chinese nationalism on the other. She sees opposition to the Gaimusho and to Kasumigaseki diplomacy as not just coming from the military but as the result of institutional adjustments made at the uppermost strata of Japanese government – councils dominated by military sympathizers. No simple causal explanation for the failure of the Gaimusho can be assigned and she perceives this as a multifaceted systemic failure.

Brooks views as initial failures the Gaimusho’s diminishing jurisdiction in Manchuria beginning in 1905, the establishment of the Advisory Council on Foreign Relations in 1915, the creation of the Takumusho (Colonial Ministry) in 1929, the expulsion of the Gaimusho from its treaty port role in Manchuria in 1932, and the Gaimusho’s failure to halt the creation of the Ko-Ain (Asia Development Board) in 1938. These are followed by the establishment of the Dai To-Asho (Greater East Asia

Ministry) which effectively terminated the Gaimusho's activities in China by closing offices and recalling personnel. In addition, Brooks documents two categories of "external" agencies, both in the field and in Tokyo, that impinged on Gaimusho authority. The politicization of the China issue in Japan and a repudiation of the Gaimusho itself in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War and the inability to protect Japanese nationals residing in China—and their economic interests – are also factors.

There are particularly enlightening assessments about Anglo-American diplomats, U.S. consuls in China, and western diplomats in general as well as Japanese diplomatic recruitment and career paths, the Paris Peace Conference, the Fengtian consuls-general, Manchuria and the Manchurian Incident, the Nationalist Chinese government, and the South Manchurian Railway. The careers of Hayashi Kijuro, Hirota Koki, Horiuchi Tateki, Ishii Itaro, Matsuoka Yosuke, Shidehara Kijuro, and Uhaki Kazushige are well documented and their contributions and public and private opinions are elucidated. In addition the background and significance of the Ko-Ain (Asia Development Board) and To-Akyoku (Bureau of Asiatic Affairs) are clarified. Brooks documents the failure of the Japanese Foreign Ministry to prevent all-out war between Japan and Jiang Jieshi's (Chiang Kai-shek) Nationalist China and perceives this as a result of "internal" aspects including flaws in the ministry itself and its personnel system as well as "external" factors including other agencies in the Japanese government, notably the army. Likewise, the Gaimusho in China went well beyond the normative role it had in the affairs of other nations, creating contradictions between the diplomatic roles in the context of treaty port imperialism and normal diplomacy.

Japan's leading consuls and consuls-general recognized this circumstance. Initially the Japanese Foreign Ministry occupied a premiere position among Japan's new government institutions and was the chief agency responsible for relations with the West. A failure to focus on a significance China policy, internal divisions within the Gaimusho (Anglo-American versus Kasumigaseki diplomacy), and the issue of Chinese sovereignty and the resistance of China service diplomats to Japanese expansionism served to diminish its status.

Brooks's assessment adds to our understanding of a critical period in Sino-Japanese history and foreign relations. In particular she enhances two chapters in the *Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 6: The Twentieth Century*, particularly those of Ikuhiko Hata and Mark

Peattie. [1, 2]. Likewise there is an emended view of Peattie's chapter on China treaty ports [3]. The discussion of Manchuria and Manchukuo elucidates perspectives expressed in a dissertation by Kenichiro Hirano [4], and older works, especially the latter sections of books written by Michael Hunt and Ian Nish [5, 6], as well as Young's older multi-volume treatise [7]. Clearly, Brooks's analysis helps readers to understand a prewar report, *War and Diplomacy in the Japanese Empire* by Tatsuji Takeuchi [8]. Lastly, her volume helps to update the Anglo-American orientation seen in the Japanese Foreign Ministry in the classic by Akira Iriye. *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* [9].

In sum, Brooks presents a compelling diplomatic historical analysis and demonstrates that the prewar Japanese state was less than monolithic and its celebrated bureaucracy and liberal diplomacy was severely stressed in China. Had the opinions of middle and lower-level bureaucrats prevailed over those of the military and detractors in other Japanese agencies, the history of the later 1930s and the 1940s might have been radically different.

Notes

[1]. Ikuhiko Hata. "Continental Expansion, 1905-1941," in Peter Duus et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 6: The Twentieth Century*, pp. 271-315, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

[2]. Mark Peattie. "The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945," in Peter Duus et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 6: The Twentieth Century*, pp., 217-271, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

[3]. Mark Peattie. "Japanese Treaty Port Settlements in China, 1895-1937" in Peter Duus, et al., eds. *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1927*, pp. 166-209. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

[4]. Kenichiro Hirano. *The Japanese in Manchuria, 1906-1931: A Study of the Historical Background to Manchukuo* Ph.D. dissertation. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1982.

[5]. Michael Hunt. *Frontier Defense and the Open Door: Manchuria in Chinese-American Relations, 1895-1911*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.

[6]. Ian Nish. *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo Japanese Relations, 1908-23*. London: Althone Press, 1972.

[7]. C. Walter Young. *Japan's Special Position in*

Manchuria, 3 vols., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1931.

[8]. Tatsuji Takeuchi. *War and Diplomacy in the Japanese Empire*. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1935.

[9]. Akira Iriye. *Across the Pacific: An Inner History*

of American-East Asian Relations. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967.

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