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## Translation, Colonization, and the Fall of Utopia: The Qing Decline as Explained Through Chinese Fiction

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### Introduction

At its heart, the late imperial Chinese novel *The Water Margin* 水滸傳 (Ch. *Shuihu zhuan*, Jp. *Suikoden*) is a text intimately concerned with the construction, interrogation, and dissolution of various types of boundaries: a theme apparent from the title of the work itself, which centers on the physical and geographic limits of the monarch's hegemony, to the ways in which the author(s) of *The Water Margin* uses the 108 Liangshan outlaws to explore the relationship between center and periphery from an array of political, ethical, and normative standpoints.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have long noted the importance of *The Water Margin* to the literary and visual culture of greater East Asia—especially Edo-period Japan, where the narrative was consumed in a dazzling panoply of translations, adaptations, parodies, spinoffs, woodblock illustrations, and even board games based (often, very tenuously) on the Chinese original.<sup>2</sup> Less analyzed, however, is the surge of popularity the novel enjoyed in Japan during the Meiji (1868–1912), Taishō (1912–1926), and even early Shōwa (1926–1989) periods: a spike in interest that had as much to do with seismic shifts in Sino-Japanese cultural and political relations, as with the intrinsic attraction of the narrative itself. For Japanese writers and intellectuals who either traveled to China or were at least interested in Chinese politics, the amoral chaos described in *The Water Margin* provided a readymade allegory for the turbulent end of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) and emergence of the Republican regime (1911–1949). Commentators such as Mori Ōgai 森鷗外 (1862–1922), Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰 (1863–1957), Masaoka Shiki 正岡子規 (1867–1902), Kano Naoki 狩野直樹 (1868–1947), and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892–1927) informed their readers



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that *The Water Margin* provided a perfect “snapshot” (*shashin*) of contemporary Chinese society, and the comparison between China and *The Water Margin* became *de rigueur* in Japanese literary travel documents of the period.<sup>3</sup>

This paper focuses on Meiji-period Japanese engagement with one of *The Water Margin*'s offspring texts: the early Qing-dynasty *Sequel to 'The Water Margin'* 水滸後傳 (*Shuihu houzhuan*, hereafter called *The Sequel*), composed by the Zhejiang literatus Chen Chen 陳忱 in the wake of the 1644 Manchu conquest of Ming China.<sup>4</sup> The original *Water Margin* concludes by describing the outlaws' redemptive involvement in a series of campaigns against various groups of rebels and invaders—a series of campaigns in which many of the outlaws are killed. *The Sequel* takes off from this melancholy concluding note, by narrating the adventures of a select group of the surviving outlaws, who ultimately leave China and establish a new political regime in an overseas region called “Siam” 暹羅 (*Xianluo*). Like its parent work, *The Sequel* found an enthusiastic readership in early modern and modern Japan, where it was mentioned in numerous miscellanies and utilized as a springboard for original adaptations like Kyokutei Bakin's 曲亭馬琴 (1767–1848) *Chinsetsu yumiharizuki* 椿説弓張月 (*Tale of the Crescent Moon*). In the late nineteenth century, the novel was translated into Japanese by the *kanshi* poet and scholar Mori Kainan 森槐南 (1863–1911), whose translation was published serially by the Tokyo-based Kōin shinshisha publishing house between 1893 and 1895. Although the late nineteenth century has traditionally been presented as a period of rupture in Sino-Japanese relations, when Japanese intellectuals turned their backs on Chinese texts in favor of Western works in translation, Mori's undertaking suggests instead a continuous tradition of literary engagement, evidenced by the translation's enthusiastic reception, the translator's presumption of audience familiarity with the conventions of Chinese fiction, and the newspaper editors' conscious evocation of traditional literary commentary (*pingdian*) in the margins and columns of the printed page. Thus, within a broader history of Sino-Japanese literary relations, the case of Mori Kainan's translation militates against the politically derived periodization schema that has structured the study of early modern East Asian literary history and highlights the entrenchment of allegedly “premodern” concerns and hermeneutics in the late nineteenth century.

*The Sequel* expands the geographic scope of its predecessor by locating crucial strands of the narrative in exotic locales such as Southeast

Asia (Siam and Champa), the Ryukyus, Korea, and Japan. I argue that this aspect of the novel—what Ellen Widmer has termed its “busy internationalism”—constitutes a key to understanding its popularity in Japanese translation.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the fact that Japan itself appears as a setting in the novel, Japanese interest in *The Sequel* must be read with relation to the text’s radically different mode of representing the central characters: characters who are transformed from rebellious outlaws into civilized colonizers responsible for transplanting a reified Chinese essence on an international stage. The novel’s central focus on expansion and colonization took on new significance against the backdrop of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), which bisected the publication of Mori’s translation and was addressed explicitly in the paratextual features of the text. Thus, in both its original form and Japanese translation, *The Sequel* partook of a contemporary reevaluation of the relationship between center and periphery, as “Siam” was divested of its symbolic significance as a refuge from dynastic crisis and reconstituted as a trope for the complex linguistic, cultural, and political negotiations underlying the act of translation itself.

### Utopia in Translation

Although, like most early modern Chinese novels, *The Sequel* resists easy summary, it is necessary to provide a brief précis before turning attention to the unique features of Mori Kainan’s translation. Whereas the original *Water Margin* ends during the troubled final years of the Northern Song emperor Huizong 宋徽宗 (r. 1100–1126), *The Sequel* centers on events during and after the collapse of the Northern Song at the hands of Khitan and Jurchen invaders from the north. As every reader of *The Water Margin* knows, many of the central characters are killed in the final pages of the narrative, and *The Sequel* relates the adventures of several of the surviving outlaws, whose numbers are bolstered by an array of new confederates and relatives. One strand of the complicated storyline focuses on events in China, including the calamitous fall of the capital at Kaifeng, the capture of the feckless Chinese emperor by Jurchen troops, and the hurried Chinese political regrouping under the auspices of the Southern Song. Another strand, however, moves far beyond the geographic confines of the Central Plains by narrating the overseas adventures of Li Jun 李俊: a minor character in the original *Water Margin*, who is promoted to a starring role in *The Sequel*. In the final chapters of the 100- and 120-chapter editions of *The Water Margin*, the reader is told that later in life, Li Jun established a

new kingdom in a faraway region called Siam. This brief and enigmatic passage is fleshed out in *The Sequel*, which centers on Li Jun and his entourage's journey, and imagines Siam as a place where Chinese civilization might recover and rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the Northern Song. If, as Ellen Widmer argues, the fall of the Song as depicted in the novel is read as an allegory for the fall of the Ming in 1644, then "Siam" takes on central importance as the signifier of a general hope for dynastic restoration and revival—a hope that was largely extinguished by the time Chen Chen composed his novel in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>6</sup>

Even a cursory examination demonstrates that the Siam of *The Sequel* bears little resemblance to the historical kingdom of the same name, and its geographic location is left tantalizingly vague in the novel. What is less vague, perhaps, is the imagined world's relation to China itself. It quickly becomes apparent that Siam, as presented in *The Sequel*, is a particularly familiar utopia, and one that bears striking and persistent resemblance to the deposed and decentered Chinese realm. As early as the second chapter, a traveler to Siam tells one of the Liangshan outlaws that Siamese geography, flora, and fauna is "no different from China" (*yu Zhonghua wuyi*), and this description—voiced at regular intervals throughout the novel—is confirmed when Li Jun and his followers discover for themselves that the inhabitants of Siam are descended from the Handynasty aristocracy, speak fluent Chinese, desire intermarriage with Chinese settlers, and base their government upon Han and Tang models.<sup>7</sup> With these already potent similarities serving as a foundation, Li Jun and his armies embark upon a mission of conquest and colonization that brings Siam to an even more Sinicized state. The inhabitants are subdued through a heady mixture of Chinese military prowess and magic, and a bureaucracy modeled directly on the Chinese system is established through the enfeoffment of Li and his followers. In the final chapters of the novel, the island is honored with a temporary visit by the Southern Song emperor Gaozong 宋高宗 (r. 1129–1162), whose presence confers legitimacy on the infant regime. Although the Liangshan outlaws themselves are displaced in a foreign environment, the overwhelming similarities between China and Siam ensure that what actually occurs is what David Der-wei Wang has termed "an overseas re-establishment of Chinese orthodoxy," rather than a true break with China.<sup>8</sup>

Although Chen Chen published his work under a pseudonym, backdated the preface of the work to 1608, and employed various modes

of camouflage throughout the novel, *The Sequel* is transparently a novel concerned with the consequences of dynastic upheaval and national trauma: a focus that perhaps explains its popularity in Meiji-period Japan during a similarly tumultuous—if less overtly violent—redrawing of political and epistemological boundaries. *The Sequel* reached its apogee of popularity during the Meiji, but like its parent work, it was imported into Japan much earlier. *The Sequel* never attained even a fraction of the original *Water Margin*'s fame during the Edo period, but it was still mentioned in a number of early modern miscellanies by aficionados of Chinese narrative. The historian Seita Tansō 清田儋叟 (1719–1785), author of a lengthy commentary on the original *Water Margin*, indicated his awareness of two continuations of *The Water Margin* (the other being the similarly titled *Later Chronicle of the Water Margin* 後水滸傳 [*Hou Shuihu zhuan*]) and argued that only Chen's *Sequel* could be considered “a real sequel” (*makoto ni kōhen*).<sup>9</sup> Kyokutei Bakin's engagement with *The Sequel* in the preparation of his own novel, *Tales of the Crescent Moon* between 1807 and 1811 has been frequently noted, but Bakin had already been interested in the text for several years at that point. During a trip to the Kamigata region in 1802, Bakin encountered a copy of the novel in a Nagoya bookshop. Although he was only able to steal a “harried” (*sōsotsu*) glance at the text, Bakin copied *The Sequel*'s table of contents into his journal, along with a brief summary of the main characters and speculation that Li Jun's adventures in Siam might have been based on the real-life escapades of the Japanese adventurer Yamada Nagamasa 山田長政 (1590–1630), who served as an advisor to the Ayutthaya kingdom in the early seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> In his notes, Bakin commented on the rarity of *The Sequel* in Japan and noted that many booksellers were unaware of even the title.<sup>11</sup>

Despite this burgeoning interest in the early modern period, it was not until the Meiji period that the work was translated into Japanese. The year 1882 alone witnessed two abortive attempts at translating the work: the first by a certain Kuki Akira 九岐晰 (dates uncertain), and the second by the short-lived polymath, Matsumura Misao 松村操 (d. 1884).<sup>12</sup> The Kuki translation gives the impression of being a somewhat dilettantish production: the work's preface suggested that the translator was unaware of *The Sequel*'s existence until obtaining a catalogue from the Shenbao publishing house in Shanghai, and the translation terminated after the second chapter (out of forty).<sup>13</sup> The Matsumura translation at least brought the reader up through the sixteenth chapter before breaking off, providing

the reader with approximately two-fifths of the original novel. In the preface to the work, Matsumura surmised (correctly) that the novel was the work of an early Qing writer, and like Kuki, he was effusive in his praise of *The Sequel*: arguing that the novel eclipsed its predecessor in many respects.<sup>14</sup> Considering the vertigo-inducing high status *The Water Margin* enjoyed in Meiji-period Japan, this was fulsome praise indeed, but there is no reason to believe that the two translators' claims were motivated by commercial imperatives alone. As the reception of Mori Kainan's later translation of *The Sequel* suggests, educated Meiji readers did enjoy the poetry, parallel prose, and classical-language landscape description that Chen Chen used to great effect in his sequel.

Despite these tentative stabs at producing a Japanese edition of *The Sequel*, readers desiring to read the full novel in translation would have to wait an additional decade for the serial edition produced by Mori Kainan for the Kōin shinshisha publishing house between 1893 and 1895. Mori is a figure familiar to all scholars of Meiji-period literary culture, although certain aspects of his career have drawn more attention than others.<sup>15</sup> In addition to his highly visible position as a *kanshi* poet, educator, and politician, Mori Kainan was a noted authority on traditional Chinese fiction, whose extensive writing on the subject might be taken as an embryonic point of origin for the developing academic discipline of Chinese literary history (*Shina bungakushi*) in Japan. For instance, in a six-part series of “chats” (*hanashi*) published in *Waseda bungaku* between 1891 and 1892, Mori sketched out a general history of Chinese fiction that began with the fabled collection of Yu Chu 虞初 during the Western Han (206 BCE–220 CE), continued with the *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* of the medieval period, developed further in vernacular and oral narratives of the Song period, and climaxed with “mature” works like *The Water Margin*, *Journey to the West* 西遊記 (*Xiyouji*), and *Dream of the Red Chamber* 紅樓夢 (*Hongloumeng*) in the Yuan (1279–1368), Ming (1368–1644), and Qing dynasties.<sup>16</sup> A similar narrative of development (*hatten*) and progress (*shinpo*) would undergird later, better-known studies like Sasagawa Rinpū's 笹川臨風 *Short History of Chinese Fiction and Drama* 支那小説戯曲小史 (*Shina shōsetsu gikyoku shōshi*, 1897).<sup>17</sup> In other treatises, Mori asserted that traditional Chinese fiction provided ideal fodder for the composition of poetry and described novels like *The Water Margin* and *Dream of the Red Chamber* as a limitless storehouse of inspiration for aspiring *kanshi* poets.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in terms of his public reputation, literary talent, and respect for the genre of traditional fiction, Mori was ideally

poised to carry out a translation of *The Sequel*. (And the endless superlatives invoked by Mori's editors in the margins of the translation suggest that it was felt that they had carried out a great coup when they commissioned him.)

The fact that the decade spanning the early 1880s and 1890s witnessed three separate attempts at translating *The Sequel* invites the question of why the novel attracted such interest at this particular juncture in history. As scholars such as Machida Saburō have demonstrated, this period was marked by a concerted effort on behalf of publishing houses to make a wide range of Chinese texts available in annotated, translated editions.<sup>19</sup> These included Classics-centered series like the *Kanbun taikei* 漢文大系 and *Kanseki kokujikai* 漢籍國字解, as well as the Hakubunkan-sponsored *Shina bungaku zensho* 支那文學全書 and *Teikoku hyakka zensho* 帝國百科全書 that included works of fiction and drama alongside the Confucian canon. Considering this desire for comprehensiveness and the long-standing popularity of the original *Water Margin* in Japan, *The Sequel* would have been a natural candidate for translation. Another possible reason for this attention lies in the relative cosmopolitanism of *The Sequel*. Compared to its parent work, in particular, *The Sequel* demonstrates a keen awareness of a wider world. As will be shown later, both translator and publishing house drew explicit connections between *The Sequel* and Japan's ongoing colonial expansion, and the basic trajectory of the plot bears remarkable similarity to contemporaneous novels like Yano Ryūkei's 矢野龍溪 (1850–1931) *Ukishiro monogatari* 浮城物語 (Tale of the Floating Castle, 1890).<sup>20</sup> Even if the descriptions of Siam are geographically nebulous and ethnographically ridiculous, the author of *The Sequel* makes frequent (and often informed) mention of regions far beyond the horizons of China—most notably, considering the present inquiry, Japan. When Bakin, for example, copied *The Sequel*'s table of contents into his journal, he made special note of the chapters involving Japan, and *The Sequel*'s engagement with an international and cosmopolitan order was of great interest to Meiji-period readers as well.

Certainly, this interpretation is suggested by the translation's framing paratexts. As Takashima Toshio has noted, the first thing that any reader of Mori's translation would have noticed was the jarringly martial tenor of its packaging.<sup>21</sup> Each installment was bound with a cover that juxtaposed the flag of the Imperial Japanese Navy, the triangular pennant dragon flag of the Qing dynasty, and a third flag emblazoned with an elephant bearing striking similarity to the flag of royal Siam. Thus, despite the fact that

Mori's undertaking was a translation of an early Qing novel set in the Song period, the imagery of the novel's cover encouraged would-be readers to approach it within the framework of *contemporary* geopolitics. The preface to Mori's translation was written by the renowned scholar, critic, novelist, and dramaturg Yoda Gakkai 依田學海 (1833–1909), who similarly appears to have approached his task with one foot in the past and one in the present. In his preface, Yoda described *The Sequel* as a correction or “supplement” 補 (*ho*) to the original *Water Margin*. In *The Water Margin*, many of the 108 outlaws had been put to death by ministers and officials who were themselves no better than common bandits and thieves 盜賊 (*tōzoku*), and Yoda argued that the deaths of the rapacious ministers Cai Jing 蔡京 and Gao Qiu 高俅 in *The Sequel* provided a long-overdue sense of catharsis lacking in its parent novel.<sup>22</sup> Yoda additionally pointed to the opening or founding 開國 (*kaikoku*) of Siam as the fulfillment of ambitions that had been frustrated and thwarted in the original *Water Margin*. The term *kaikoku* was, of course, a term that had assumed important status in Meiji political discourse by the time of Yoda's preface, and Yoda suggested a parallel between Li Jun's colonial adventures abroad and the present day. It would be a mistake, Yoda wrote, to see *The Sequel* as a simple antique curiosity: rather, its themes were relevant not only to the twilight of the Song, but to “contemporary times” 當世 (*tōsei*) as well.<sup>23</sup>

If Yoda's argument about the relevance of *The Sequel* to Meiji-period Japan appears far-fetched, it was at least consistent with the marketing campaign adopted by the translation's publishers. The Tokyo-based Kōin shinshisha publishing company was affiliated with Fukuzawa Yukichi's 福澤諭吉 (1835–1901) Keiō Gijuku Academy (modern Keiō University) and published a broad array of works on politics, history, literature, and economics.<sup>24</sup> In a special announcement appended to the first installment of Mori's translation, the editors described the publishing house as “independent, unique, and free of any party affiliation” (*dokuritsu, doppo, seitō ni kankei naku*): a disingenuous claim for any media company to make, but a clear response to the increasingly fractious and partisan atmosphere of late Meiji publishing.<sup>25</sup> The editors emphasized their desire to publish works that sparked debate and spread information openly and impartially, and an image of the anticipated readership for Mori's translation can be gleaned by the other works advertised at the end of each fascicle: texts that included primers on economics and political science,



disquisitions on contemporary events, annotated collections of popular theatre, and writing guides for amateur *haiku* practitioners.

Yoda Gakkai's preface was capped with a short encomium by the classical scholar and belletrist Kawada Ōkō 川田甕江 (1830–1896), whose imprimatur lent additional gravity to the translation, and who praised Yoda's preface as being "of the same breath as Jin Shengtan" (*Kin Seitan no kōki*). The Suzhou literatus Jin Shengtan 金聖歎 (d. 1661) was famous for his extensive commentary to the original *Water Margin*, and Kawada's brief remark foreshadowed an intriguing feature of Mori Kainan's translation: the extensive critical commentary published alongside the body of the translation itself. Starting with the second installment of Mori's translation (chapters three and four of *The Sequel*), the publishers appended extended commentary by critics and reviewers at competing periodicals—a body of commentary reminiscent in both format and style of the traditional fiction criticism of Chinese critics like Jin, Li Zhuowu 李卓吾 (1527–1602), and Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡 (1670–1698).<sup>26</sup> The reviewers' comments—sometimes only a few lines in length, and at other times, quite lengthy—help create a sense of Meiji-period readers' horizon of interpretive expectations.<sup>27</sup> By and large, the reviewers were highly complimentary of Mori's undertaking: if not of the original novel itself, then at least of Mori's translation. A reviewer for Tokutomi Sohō's (1863–1957) *Kokumin no tomo*, for instance, stated that while no one was unfamiliar with the original *Water Margin*, not many readers were aware of *The Sequel*, which had benefited immensely from its translation at the hands of a renowned poet like Mori.<sup>28</sup> The review for the *Akita nichichi-shinbun* worried that readers of the translation would be unable to fully appreciate the work without Mori's sinological expertise, but conceded that this was an issue of the original and not the translation, which was described using Jin Shengtan's trademark adjective, "marvelous" 妙 (*myō*, Ch. *miao*).<sup>29</sup> A reviewer for the *Nihon shinbun* attempted to split the difference by stating that the interesting sections of the text were due to the skill of the translator, and the "boring parts" (*omoshirokaranu tokoro*) the fault of the original author.<sup>30</sup> The last comment is intriguing in what it reveals about the reviewers' attitudes toward the act of translation itself. Nowhere is any expectation of *genbun itchi*-esque verisimilitude or translational fidelity apparent: if anything, it is Mori's skill as a poet that is invoked as a qualification for translation, along with his ability to "jazz up" the allegedly dull passages of the original. Whereas Meiji-period Japanese readers would hail the gritty mimesis and dialogue of the original

*Water Margin* as uncannily proto-modern attempts at Western-style “naturalism” (*shizen shugi*), the reviewers for *The Sequel* often took the opposite approach.<sup>31</sup> In one of the few negative reviews of the translation, the reviewer for the *Saga jiyū shinbun* took Mori to task for translating the novel’s dialogue into a “low-class Tokyo argot” (*beranmē shakai no iyashiki kotoba*) that clashed with the more florid narrative descriptions found in other sections of the novel.<sup>32</sup>

### The Decline of the Qing As Explained Through Chinese Fiction

The dissemination and reception of Mori Kainan’s translation of *The Sequel* must be understood against a larger interpretive backdrop, in which Japanese readers of works of traditional Chinese fiction and drama attempted to apply their (often considerable) knowledge of China’s textual tradition to discussions of *contemporary* China. This endeavor rested upon two assumptions: first, that fiction and drama offered a privileged point of entry into the customs and mindset of a putative Chinese national people (*Shina kokumin*); and second, that little had changed between the Japanese observers’ present and the time in which novels like *The Water Margin* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* were first composed. In his lectures on *The Water Margin* and other works of Chinese fiction, Kano Naoki, doyen of Chinese studies at Kyoto University, explicitly argued the first point—suggesting that Chinese fiction was unique among other genres in its ability to provide information about Chinese social and moral life:

In the West, sinologists (*Shinagakusha*) have already translated part of [the Ming short story collection] *Jingu qiguan* into English and French. Several of the plays from the Yuan dynasty have also been translated into these languages. The reason for this is that literary research is an essential means of understanding Chinese society. *From issues of morality and customs all the way down to the structure of the family, there’s more information in novels than in any other type of literature.* This is why Western scholars turned their attention to these works early on.<sup>33</sup>

また西洋の支那学者にありては、例へば「古今奇観」は英仏語にその一部が翻訳される。元曲もその幾部分は英仏語に翻訳される。それは文学の研究が支那の社会を知るに必要なるが故なり。支那人の道德・風俗に関する事、支那の家族の事は、他の文学よりも小説に表はる。そのよく西洋の学者が早くから研究する理由なり。

Similarly, that many Japanese commentators believed that little had changed between sixteenth century China and contemporary China is

evidenced by numerous documents of the period. For instance, in an 1897 literary roundtable recorded in the pages of Mori Ōgai's *Mezamashigusa*, the translator and journalist Morita Shiken 森田思軒 (1861–1897) argued that *The Water Margin* was a “snapshot” (*shashin*) not only of the period in which the novel was composed, but of contemporary China as well.<sup>34</sup> As will be demonstrated below, Mori Kainan approached his translation of *The Sequel* under similar assumptions.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, a unifying feature of the comments to Mori Kainan's translation of *The Sequel* was interest in both the novel's mention of Japan, and what the novel might reveal about Chinese attitudes toward Japan. There is a frequent tendency on behalf of translator, publisher, and reader alike to elide distinctions between the China represented in *The Sequel* and contemporary China, and to apply premodern descriptions of Japan to the present day. In the same way that Morita Shiken and his coterie described the original *Water Margin* as a snapshot of both Song-period and contemporary China, so too was Mori Kainan's translation of *The Sequel* presented as a means of understanding contemporary affairs. This paradigm was encouraged by Mori's editors at the Kōin shinshisha, who utilized all available advertisement space to comment on contemporary political developments in East and Southeast Asia. A prefatorial note at the beginning of the sixth installment of the translation, for example, made an elliptical comparison of the fall of the Northern Song under Emperor Huizong to a “mirror” (*kagami*) for contemporary developments on the Korean peninsula. And in a particular stretch of the interpretive imagination, an editorial note at the head of the seventh fascicle presented *The Sequel*'s discussion of “Siam” as a way of better understanding the Franco-Siamese War of 1893!<sup>35</sup> Thus, the allegorical reading encouraged by Chen Chen's clear use of fantasy in *The Sequel* was redirected, as the editors urged the readers to simply read “Siam” as Siam. For Mori's editors at the Kōin shinshisha, the mere presence of Japan in *The Sequel* was a unique selling-point. In an advertisement appended to the fourth installment of the translation, the editors wrote: “The most marvelous part of this translation is the section dealing with interaction with Japan.” Although the editors felt that this section was “ludicrous” 荒唐 (*kōtō*) from start to finish, they came to the rather odd conclusion that “[the section] demonstrates the degree to which the people of that realm [ie, China] held our martial spirit in awe.”<sup>36</sup>

The editors' comment causes one to wonder how closely they actually read the translation. Japan does indeed make an extended cameo in *The*

*Sequel*, but the author's representation is anything but uniformly flattering. After a number of fleeting references to the Japanese archipelago in the first half of the novel, Japan emerges as a significant presence in the thirty-fourth chapter of *The Sequel*. Following Li Jun's initial pacification of Siam, a new threat to Siamese stability arises through the actions of disobedient vassals (many of whom, it should be noted, are foreigners): a mysterious Indian priest named Abbot Sa and a family of deceitful schemers from Champa, in modern Vietnam. Abbot Sa devises a plan to enlist Japanese forces as support for his intended conquest of Siam. In chapter thirty-five, the abbot's underling reaches the Japanese islands, and the author takes advantage of the arrival to provide a short primer on Japanese geography and customs:

The land of Japan consists of a series of islands in the middle of the ocean that stretch several thousand *li* across and comprise twelve states. It produces a great deal of gold, silver, and other precious goods. Even though the denizens of Japan delight in poetry, calligraphy, and the collection of antiques, they are cunning and rapacious and also take pleasure in slaughter. Japan is also called "The Dwarf Country." The twelve states support 100,000 valiant troops, making Japan a tiger crouched in a corner of the sea. The "Dwarf King" is rapacious, cruel, and lacking in benevolence. His lust for profits is endless, and the nearby kingdom of Koryo has long suffered his depredations. The Japanese king had always admired the richness of Siam and desired to swallow it up—it was just that he had not had an opportunity to do so until now.<sup>37</sup>

那日本國在大海島中，綿亙數千里，管轄十二州，多出金銀珍異之物，其人雖好詩書古玩，卻貪詐好殺。又名倭國。十二州共有十萬雄兵，虎踞海外。那倭王驚戾不仁，黷貨無厭。高麗國與他附近，常過去搶奪。每羨暹羅繁富之國，要來吞併，只是無隙可乘。

As Abbot Sa had hoped, the king of Japan dispatches several thousand troops to assist in the invasion of Siam. The troops are put under the command of an impressive "*kanpaku*" 関白 (the Japanese term is glossed and explained by the author), who rides into battle—impressively, considering that it is a naval battle—on the back of a white elephant. At this point, *The Sequel* takes a swerve into the supernatural. The strength of the Japanese army turns out to be largely predicated on their tricks and toys: in particular, an army of "black ghosts" 黒鬼 (*heigui*) who are capable of staying submerged for long periods of time and drilling holes in the Chinese flotilla. Li Jun and his army decide to fight water with water

by enlisting the magical prowess of the sorcerer Gongsun Sheng 公孫勝—another holdover from the original *Water Margin*. Gongsun Sheng calls down an icy whirlwind that freezes the water, the Japanese troops, and the Japanese ghosts (the white elephant, we are told, survives). Thus, within the span of a few pages, Japan enters and exits the novel in a cartoonish and decidedly undignified manner.

In one of translation history's great ironies, the publication of the Japan chapters of Mori's edition came out in September of 1894—directly during the outbreak and rapid escalation of hostilities between Japan and China in the First Sino-Japanese War. Although his editors at the Kōin shinshisha had described the Japanese presence in the novel as evidence of late imperial China's fascination with Japanese military prowess, Mori was no fool, and he used a series of editorial interventions to attempt to divine the author's true intentions. These comments, marked by the phrase “The translator says . . .” (*yakusha iwaku*), might best be described as half apologia, half attack. In the first of his disquisitions, Mori noted that from the middle of the Ming dynasty onward, Chinese impressions of Japan had been almost uniformly negative: a result, Mori claimed, of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 豊臣秀吉 (1537–1598) disastrous invasion of continental Asia and the damage inflicted by “the so-called ‘Japanese pirates’” (*iwayuru wakō*).<sup>38</sup> Mori went on to argue that during these times of troubled relations, fiction acted as a vicarious mode of venting Chinese anger, and in the process, Japan's national customs (*kokufū*) of loyalty, courage, duty, and valiance were impugned. While Mori urged his Japanese readers to remain calm and consider the historical circumstances underlying this slander, his discussion took a curious turn toward the modern in the final lines of his argument:

Looking at the scene from the standpoint of our country, it's not even worth chuckling over. However, there's a reason that when I undertook this translation I vowed to constantly stick to the original text and not alter a single thing. And it's because the way in which Japan is described in the Chinese imagination isn't limited to the past—even in contemporary times, you find descriptions along these lines. I wanted to demonstrate this, and my dear readers should also read the novel with this fact in mind.<sup>39</sup>

我が國より之を見れば、洵とに一笑にも當値るに足らず。今之を譯するに臨み、都て原文に従ひて、肯て一字の改竄を加へざるは、彼國人が理想中に書かれたる日本は獨り昔時のみならず、現時と雖亦往往此に似たるものあるを見はさんと欲すればなり、看官其心して讀給ふべし。

In other words, Mori's proffered justification for translating the novel is as much anthropological or ethnographic as literary. His engagement with the Japan chapters of the novel (which he claimed to have found personally distasteful) is allegedly undertaken not only to show past stereotypes of Japan, but also their current instantiations.

This elision of past and present continued throughout the remainder of the translation, as Mori grew increasingly apoplectic over *The Sequel's* many instances of *lèse-majesté*. The final installment of Mori's translation, comprising chapters thirty-five to forty, was published in September 1895: a full year after the penultimate installment and five months after the Treaty of Shimonoseki concluded hostilities between China and Japan. The victorious spirit enjoyed by *The Sequel's* readers was reflected by Mori's handling of the sensitive material in the final installment, which included the episode relating Japan's defeat by Chinese forces. The content of the chapters thus invited reflection on contemporary *realpolitik*—certainly on relations between China and Japan, but also on the fate of the small territory of “Siam” sandwiched between military and cultural superpowers. While I do not want to simply read Siam as a metaphor for Japan's colonial aspirations, it is clear that questions of territorial ambition and competing spheres of influence were foremost in Mori's mind during the composition of his translation. When, for instance, in the passage quoted earlier, the author of *The Sequel* commented on Japanese interference in Korean affairs, the comment was anything but innocent in the context of the 1895 translation. And in a departure from translational fidelity, Mori altered *The Sequel's* presentation of the Japanese ruler. Whereas the original novel describes the ruler as “rapacious, cruel, and lacking in benevolence” (*jiuli buren*), Mori translated the passage as “[the ruler] delighted in the martial” (*bu o konomeru*).<sup>40</sup> The colonization and desired annexation of Siam by both Chinese and Japanese forces in the novel created an uncomfortable dilemma for the Sinophilic but patriotic Japanese translator: a discomfort that emerged at regular intervals in the concluding chapters of the translation. *The Sequel's* denigration of Japanese territorial acquisitiveness was dismissed by Mori, for instance, as simple jealousy, and he bemoaned the fact that even as China “plaintively sues for peace [in the present era],” officers in the Zongli Yamen continued to refer to the Japanese as “island barbarians” (*tōi, shima ebisu*) in official proclamations to the Qing court.<sup>41</sup> As for the idea that Japanese forces might be subdued by a magical icy

whirlwind? Utterly preposterous, vouched Mori, who argued: “So much for the Liangshan outlaws overcoming their enemies via strength and valor! Instead, they have to rely on the trifling magic of Gongsun Sheng.”<sup>42</sup> Even if China’s armies *were* to harness the power of freak meteorology, they would find that Japanese troops do not freeze as easily in actual combat as they do in the pages of late imperial Chinese fiction:

The Qing armies originally scoffed at our troops for being unable to bear the cold when they first entered Fengtian province [in northeastern China]. But shortly afterwards, they witnessed our troops sweep through [the cities of] Gaiping and Haicheng without showing the least fear of the cold.<sup>43</sup>

我兵の奉天省に入る、清人初めは皆な我兵寒冷に耐へずとして侮り聞こえしが、やがて蓋平海城の諸城を席卷し、毫こしも凍傷を怕るる色なきを見る。

As in the previous section, Mori explained that he had left this slanderous section intact—not out of endorsement, but rather to provide his readers with “something to laugh about” 笑柄 (*shōhei*). Of course, this is much more than a statement about Japanese metabolic resistance to cold. As in previous sections of the translation, negative representations of Japan and its military are superimposed upon the shifting relationship between Meiji-period Japan and Qing-period China. In the original novel, “Siam” was presented as a place of escape and entrenchment where a reified Chinese cultural essence might be rediscovered and reestablished among the ruin of dynastic cataclysm. In the context of the translation, however, Siam is ultimately stripped of this symbolic significance and recontextualized in a network of contemporary political discussions and events.

## Conclusion

Mori Kainan’s interpretive regrounding of *The Sequel* along contemporary national concerns is consonant with a larger trend in terms of the Meiji-period reception of Chinese fiction. Whereas Edo-period critics like Kyokutei Bakin had largely explored the significance of *The Water Margin*, *The Sequel*, and other works of Chinese fiction with respect to “universal” Confucian norms, Meiji-period readers connected the work to a larger understanding of both late imperial Chinese culture, and—far more anachronistically—their contemporaneous late-Qing moment. As a common point of contact with Chinese literature and civilization, then, these quasi-anthropological or ethnographic readings of novels like *The*

*Sequel* played an important role in terms of creating a Japanese vision of the political and cultural state of China during the final years of the Qing.

Mori's translation of *The Sequel* provides a particularly vivid example of this trend—a process rendered even more visible by the fact of *The Sequel*'s explicit engagement with Japan (albeit in a highly fictionalized form), and by the remarkable coincidence of the outbreak of hostilities and Mori's completion of the Japan chapters of the novel. If in the original *Sequel*, Siam acted as a topographical *deus ex machina*, where a coherent and continuous sense of Chinese identity might be preserved, this tidy resolution is irrecoverably muddled and effaced in Mori's translation. In place of the optimistic cultural regrafting that characterizes the florescence of Chinese culture in its transplanted context, Mori's undertaking centers on a utopia in translation: a regime that highlights, rather than effaces, the political and cultural tensions apparent in the act of translation, and interrogates—albeit unintentionally at times—status relations between centers and margins.

#### NOTES

The author would like to thank Atsuko Ueda, Christina Yi, and Andre Haag, for their comments on this project at various stages of development, as well as to the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful and detailed remarks.

<sup>1</sup> *The Water Margin* centers on the assemblage of 108 outlaw-gallants during the twelfth century in the marshes of what is now Shandong province in northeastern China. The earliest editions of *The Water Margin* were printed in the sixteenth century, and the novel circulated in a variety of editions that differed drastically in terms of plot, length, and quality of printing. In the longest recensions of *The Water Margin*, the first half of the novel describes the adventures of individual outlaws and recounts the process by which each outlaw is forced into exile. In the second half of the novel, the outlaws are pardoned for their actions by the Song court and employed as a military force against other groups of rebels and invaders. The question of whether the outlaws were unappreciated men of valor or lawless criminals constituted a lively debate in premodern East Asia. The *locus classicus* of the term “water margin” (*shuihu*) is poem 237 of the *Shijing* (*Book of Odes*), which discusses how the righteous Zhou patriarch Danfu brought his people to safety at the foot of Mount Qi in present-day Shaanxi province. Two millennia later, however, the Suzhou literatus Jin Shengtan (d. 1661) offered a somewhat different interpretation of



the title's significance by arguing that the margin beyond the emperor's regime was the place where "loathsome" (*e*) traitors like the novel's main character, Song Jiang, were forced to go.

- <sup>2</sup> See Nakamura Yukihiko, "Suikoden to kinsei bungaku" (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1984), 214–68; Takashima Toshio, *Suikoden to Nihonjin* (Tokyo: Taishūkan, 1991); and, most recently, William C. Hedberg, *The Japanese Discovery of Chinese Fiction: 'The Water Margin' and the Making of a National Canon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).
- <sup>3</sup> Hedberg, *The Japanese Discovery of Chinese Fiction*, esp. chapter 4.
- <sup>4</sup> For information on Chen Chen and a discussion of the evidence connecting him to the authorship of *The Sequel*, see Ellen Widmer, *The Margins of Utopia: Shui-hu hou-chuan and the Literature of Ming Loyalism* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies), chapter 2.
- <sup>5</sup> Widmer, *The Margins of Utopia*, 52.
- <sup>6</sup> Widmer, *The Margins of Utopia*, esp. 63–71.
- <sup>7</sup> Chen Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 12. The description of the Siamese political configuration comes at the beginning of Chapter 12 on page 105.
- <sup>8</sup> David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 289.
- <sup>9</sup> Seita Tansō, *Kujakurō hikki* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965), 299. Tansō's disqualification of *Hou Shuihu zhuan* was based on the fact that the work only superficially deals with the cast of the original *Water Margin*, whereas *The Sequel* centers on their post-amnesty adventures in detail.
- <sup>10</sup> Kyokutei Bakin, *Kiryō manroku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1993), 190–95. In his notes, Bakin decided that *The Sequel* could not be based on the life of Yamada Nagamasa, since he believed *The Sequel* to predate Yamada's escapades. Perhaps Bakin accepted Chen Chen's backdate of 1608 as the true date of *The Sequel's* composition.
- <sup>11</sup> *Kiryō manroku*, 194.
- <sup>12</sup> Takashima Toshio provides a capsule biography of Matsumura Misao in *Suikoden to Nihonjin*, 216–220. Matsumura's corpus consists of a string of largely unfinished traditional Chinese fiction-related works, published in a feverish burst between 1881 and 1884. In the case of *The Water Margin* alone, Matsumura published a reading guide (*Suikoden kōgi*) and an original adaption (*Nihon Suikoden*), in addition to his incomplete translation of *The Sequel*.

Matsumura also worked on *Journey to the West (Xiyouji)*, *Plum in the Golden Vase (Jinpingmei)*, and other works of fiction.

- <sup>13</sup> Kuki Akira, *Tsūzoku Suiko kōden* (Tokyo: Yūkōsha, 1882), preface, 1.
- <sup>14</sup> Matsumura Misao, *Tsūzoku Suiko kōden* (Tokyo: Usagiya, 1882), preface, p. 1.
- <sup>15</sup> For recent scholarship on Mori Kainan in Japanese and English, see Gōyama Rintarō, *Bakumatsu-Meiji ni okeru Nihon kanshibun no kenkyū* (Osaka: Izumi shoin, 2014) and Robert Tuck, *Idly Scribbling Rhymers: Poetry, Print, and Community in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).
- <sup>16</sup> Mori Kainan, “Shina shōsetsu no hanashi,” six-part series in *Waseda bungaku* (1891–1892).
- <sup>17</sup> See Hedberg, *The Japanese Discovery of Chinese Fiction*, chapter 3.
- <sup>18</sup> Mori Kainan, *Sakushihō kōwa* (Tokyo: Bunkaidō, 1911), 312.
- <sup>19</sup> Machida Saburō, *Meiji no kangakusha-tachi* (Tokyo: Kenbun shuppan, 1998), esp. 185–230.
- <sup>20</sup> Kamei Hideo summarizes *Ukishiro monogatari* as the tale of an adventurer who “attempts to establish an ideal republic in a new land, but also attempts to liberate the nations of Southeast Asia from colonization at the hands of the Western powers.” Save for the republican system of government and the Western, rather than Japanese and Indic background of the would-be colonizers of Siam, the same summary could easily apply to *The Sequel*. Kamei Hideo, *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*, trans. Michael Bourdaghs (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 2002), 260.
- <sup>21</sup> Takashima Toshio, *Suikoden to Nihonjin*, 226–28.
- <sup>22</sup> Yoda Gakkai, Preface to Mori Kainan, trans., *Suiko kōden* (Tokyo: Kōin shinshisha), Fascicle 1 (1893), 2.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>24</sup> The publishing house’s name referred to the year of its foundation: 1890, a *kōin* year, according to the traditional calendrical cycle.
- <sup>25</sup> Mori Kainan, *Suiko kōden*, Fascicle 1 (1893), “Tokubetsu kōkoku.” For information on the increasingly important role of political partisanship in Meiji print culture, see James Huffman, *Creating a Public: People and Press in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997).

- <sup>26</sup> For a discussion of this critical tradition, see David Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), esp. Chapter 1.
- <sup>27</sup> Commentary was included in later installments of the translation as well, although there is a precipitous dropping off of quantity, quality, and enthusiasm, perhaps suggesting readers' fatigue with the lengthy novel.
- <sup>28</sup> Mori Kainan, *Suiko kōden*, Fascicle 2 (1893), "Furoku," 4–5.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.
- <sup>31</sup> An example of Meiji-period interest in the original *Water Margin* with respect to contemporary literary debates is provided in Yamaji Aizan's series of articles entitled "*The Water Margin: A Classical Model for Naturalism*" ("Shizen shugi no furuki mohan: *Suikoden*"), first published in 1910 and reprinted in Yamaji Aizan, *Dokuritsu hyōron* (Tokyo: Misuzu shobō, 1988).
- <sup>32</sup> Mori Kainan, *Suiko kōden*, Fascicle 2 (1893), "Furoku," 4. It is unclear whether the reviewer objected to Mori's experiments with the vernacular in general, or rather his use of Tokyo dialect instead of, for instance, Saga dialect as a base.
- <sup>33</sup> Kano Naoki, *Shina shōsetsu gikyoku shi* (Tokyo: Misuzu shobō, 1992), 9. Emphasis added.
- <sup>34</sup> Morita Shiken in Mori Ōgai, ed., *Mezamashigusa* (1897). The salon in which Morita made the comment included Ōgai, Morita, Yoda Gakkai, Miki Takeji, Kōda Rohan, and perhaps unsurprisingly, Mori Kainan.
- <sup>35</sup> Mori Kainan, *Suiko kōden*, Fascicles 6 and 7 (1893). To the editors' credit, these statements are not developed anywhere else.
- <sup>36</sup> Mori Kainan, *Suiko kōden*, Fascicle 4 (1893), "Tokubetsu kōkoku."
- <sup>37</sup> *Shuihu houzhuan*, 317.
- <sup>38</sup> Mori Kainan, *Suiko kōden*, Fascicle 15 (1894), 77–78.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.
- <sup>40</sup> Mori Kainan, *Suiko kōden*, Fascicle 18 (1895), 10.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 33–34.

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