

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Hiromi Mizuno, *Science for the Empire: Scientific Nationalism in Modern Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, 288pp. \$US 55.00 hardcover (978-0-8047-5961-8)

Hiromi Mizuno studies how Japanese professionals in science analysis and/or science management have developed visions of what good science is. She finds that by the end of the Second World War, most professional discourse-makers believed that science should not be used for purely scientific objectives, but that it should be mobilized for the good of the Japanese nation. She begins her analysis with the production of discourse that followed the Japanese expansion in Asia after the First World War, and ends with the capitulation of Japan to the Allied Forces. The discourse of Japanese professionals on science changed with the expansion, contraction, and death of the Japanese empire. Hiromi Mizuno provides a careful narrative of this history. The book is original, extremely well written, and well researched.

Hiromi Mizuno has done an important service for sociologists of science in Japan, and for political economists and scholars of economic development and political modernity, for whom Japan is the emblem of a nation reborn: after World War Two, the values of modern science and democracy replaced Japan's alleged prewar and premodern irrationalism. Many scholars influenced to varying degrees by modernization theory believe that Asian countries like Japan, India, and South Korea owe their postwar economic and political successes to their conversion to the modern belief that science can be mobilized effectively for the nation by the state, universities, and industrial conglomerates. Some scholars (such as John W. Meyer and his associates) interested in the international diffusion of the paradigmatic discourse on "science in the nation's service" or "science for development" have argued that this discourse was first crafted in Western democracies, and then adopted by the rest of the world after the Second World War.

Hiromi Mizuno shows that this was not the case in Japan. The discourse on "science in the service of the nation" that we associate with the postwar era had *already* been established in the imperial period *between the two world wars*. If the Japanese government explained its defeat by the scientific superiority of the West in mastering the atom, an inferiority that had to be overcome, and not due to political factors (such as the

Soviet declaration of war), Japanese discourse on the utility of science for the nation was not, *pace* modernization theorists, *the trait* that differentiated the prewar and postwar periods. Indeed, as Hiromi Mizuno writes, “what distinguishes this scientific nationalism from other kinds of nationalism in Japan is that it was one — and could possibly be *the only one* — that survived World War II untainted” (p. 183, italics mine).

To explain the increasing hegemony of this discourse, Hiromi Mizuno adopts a critical approach similar to Kelly Moore’s book on scientists’ understandings of their social responsibility in postwar America (*Disrupting Science*, 2008). Mizuno demonstrates that just before the war, engineers, social scientists (dangerously labelled “Marxist”), and popular writers in science youth magazines began to talk and write in similar ways about the role of scientists vis-à-vis the nation and the empire. Both those who lauded and those who criticized the government for its aggression in East Asia agreed that science had to be engaged for the nation. Scientific nationalism had become what Pierre Bourdieu would have called the *doxa* shared by orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the field of science, or what others would call a hegemonic discourse, used even by those who challenge those in power. To a certain extent, the convergence of their discourses explains its survival after the war: there was no alternative. The discourse of the international brotherhood of scientists who pursued purely scientific dreams was no longer credible in an age of hot and cold wars.

Hiromi Mizuno also uses the theory of collective memory to explain why this discourse survived the war. The memory of how “science in the service of the nation” had been used before and during the war had to be erased. Specifically, the most obvious associations between scientific nationalism and the celebration of Japanese racial superiority during the colonization of Asia had to be removed from Japan’s collective memory. The social scientists (“Marxists”) who, before the war, spoke of the responsibility of scientists to their nation could better hide their participation in the collective celebration of “science in the service of the nation” during the war. This was not so easy for the engineers who had been intimately involved in the administration of Japanese colonies. The engineers who had used the state apparatus in occupied Manchuria to demonstrate how science could be used for the extraction and expropriation of natural resources in the service of their nation’s war effort (to the detriment of the populations they robbed) were kept away from Japanese science planning agencies after the war. They were replaced by the social scientists whose association with the activities of the empire was more distant.

Science for the Empire is one of the best illustrations of what the critical analysis of discourse can achieve, but it suffers from that perspective's inherent limitations. Readers who are interested in the sociology of the state and of professions will want to know more about how jurisdictional conflicts between these professional groups were settled. For example, how did the state administrators whom Hiromi Mizuno calls the "law bureaucrats" maintain their position vis-à-vis the scientists and social scientists who tried to replace them in the state agencies for science? The reader does not learn whether the different uses of the discourse on "science in the service of the nation" affected the balance of power among the various professional groups: critical discourse theory fails to explain how the struggle to appropriate state resources is settled in different professions (engineers, social scientists, lawyers, journalists). Therefore, the next step would be to articulate how the production and use of these discourses explain the symbolic and material profit generated by each group; or how these discourses can affect the way science(s) are organized.

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