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Gender And Law In The Japanese Imperium (University of Hawai'i Press, 2014) is a collection of essays originating in a conference held in the University of Chicago in 2006. It represents a contribution not only to the historiography of gender in modern Japan, but also, as the title suggests, to the study of the history of law in Japan and the Japanese colonies. The aim, in respect of the latter body of scholarship, is to stimulate work in the general sphere of the social and cultural dimensions of Japanese legal history, arguing that, perhaps due to the prevalent ideology of a weak Japanese legal consciousness, the field has been 'largely moribund' (p.6) in the recent past. Indeed, these essays do a good job of revealing the law as a multi-faceted institution. The potential for storytelling in the courtroom revealed through Darryl Flaherty's essay on the trial of Yamafuji Kanko will come as no surprise to fans of NPR's recent podcast *Serial*, but legislative committees, colonial administration, and public debate all emerge as other stages for legal drama. Likewise, criminal, civil, family and administrative law all offer interpretive possibilities. Together the essays substantiate the goal of exposing the law as more than 'a technology of state control... [but] as fluid and relational, subject to negotiation, interpretation, and contestation... a contested set of discourses and practices' (p.7). [comment about the relationship between society and state and legal studies as a useful means of exploring these?, and suggest the law as subject of great potential in investigating the relationship between state and society, as problematized by the likes of Garon (), and Tipton()]

The book is organized into three thematic sections, covering 'Prostitution, Law, and Human Rights' (Chapters 1 & 2), 'Crime, Punishment, and Gender' (Chapters 3 to 6), and 'Colonial Law and the Problem of Family' (Chapters 7 to 9). Essays stretch from the first years of the Meiji period to the early post-war, post-occupation period, but the bulk of the content concentrates on the early twentieth century, when Japan's image of itself in the wider world was becoming complicated by issues of the emerging Japanese empire.

Placing these individual pieces of research beside one another gives rise to a number of insights. For example, in the first section, Douglas Howland's fresh perspective on the familiar subject of the *Maria Luz* incident and Sally A Hastings's essay on 1950s debates surrounding prostitution, together stress the persistence across time of issues, debates, and discourses. Likewise, essays such as Susan L Burns's on abortion in the early Meiji era and Harald Fuess's on adultery reveal the important interplay between law-as-written and law-as-practised. But perhaps the most striking and sustained thread woven through the book, especially prominent in the final section, is the intersection between different categories such as gender, race, class, and colonial relations. The complexities of family law in Taiwan and Korea, and the role of 'custom' was, to me at least, a new and exciting topic. Essays by Chen Chao-ju, Barbara J Brooks, and Matsutani Motozuki develop it, revealing well known laws such as the 'Name-Changing Policy' as at once less (not an imposed name change) and more (an attempt to restructure the very nature of the Korean family) than the event's common understanding, whilst seemingly dry administrative issues surrounding the differences between Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese family registration emerge as bearing surprising social potency.

One, perhaps notable, absence is much in the way of consideration of the role of the law in shaping ideas of masculinity and manhood. Men are present, of course: one of the chief tensions in Darryl Flaherty's essay is that of the law as an institution populated exclusively by men ruling on the alleged crimes of a woman. Nevertheless, where the book explores the power of the law as 'a means of creating and regulating gendered subjects and social norms about sexuality and the family' (p.2), for the most part it is the nature and sexuality of women that is under consideration. Perhaps this reveals that the subject of the pre-war Japanese law was presumed male, and thus explicit mention of gender was focused exclusively on women but, a) if so this argument needs making and b) there must still be scope to write a history read against the grain. Regardless, masculinity as constructed through law – men as criminals, as judges and jurors, and as the heads of the legal family unit, to say nothing of the Emperor as symbolic father of the nation (echoing Joan Scott's argument about gender as metaphor, mentioned here in passing by Harald Fuess) – seems a rich avenue of potential exploration.

This is, it should be said, less a criticism of the content of the book than it is a suggestion that it might more accurately have been titled *Women, Family and Law in the Japanese Imperium*, and a potential avenue down

which the book's central methodological thread might usefully be extended. In summary, then, this book is a welcome addition to the rich scholarship of gender & women's history in Japan, and an interesting suggestion for the reinvigoration of legal history, especially in the context of social and cultural history.

Ian Rapley, January 2016, *Cardiff University*