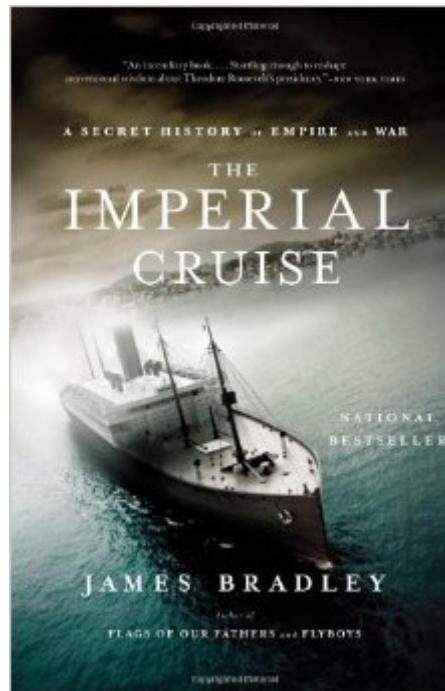


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The Imperial Cruise: A Secret History Of Empire And War



Synopsis

On the success of his two bestselling books about World War II, James Bradley began to wonder what the real catalyst was for the Pacific War. What he discovered shocked him. In 1905 President Teddy Roosevelt dispatched Secretary of War William Taft, his daughter Alice, and a gaggle of congressmen on a mission to Japan, the Philippines, China, and Korea with the intent of forging an agreement to divide up Asia. This clandestine pact lit the fuse that would-decades later-result in a number of devastating wars: WWII, the Korean War, and the communist revolution in China. In 2005, James Bradley retraced that epic voyage and discovered the remarkable truth about America's vast imperial past. Full of fascinating characters brought brilliantly to life, *The Imperial Cruise* will powerfully revise the way we understand U.S. history.

Book Information

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Back Bay Books; Reprint edition (November 8, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316014001

ISBN-13: 978-0316014007

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (473 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #95,232 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #76 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Diplomacy](#) #89 in [Books > History > Asia > Japan](#) #112 in [Books > History > Asia > China](#)

Customer Reviews

I downloaded the Kindle edition of this book and right away read Chapter 8 on Theodore Roosevelt's flattering and self-interested secret proposal to the Japanese Government of a 'Japanese Monroe Doctrine' for Asia, in essence a private invitation to play the imperialist game which, as Baron Kaneko later lamented in a paper written in 1932, Roosevelt never admitted making or endorsed and took to his grave in 1919, despite promising to Kaneko in a farewell lunch at Sagamore Hill on September 10, 1905 that he would publicly announce it after he left office. Other reviewers have pointed out that there is not much about the cruise undertaken by W.H. Taft and Alice Roosevelt in this book, and I feel it is mainly a convenient device to tell a tale which is really expressed in the sub-title 'A Secret History of Empire and War.' There are in fact two main narrative

threads here: a rather gruesome and to many readers upsetting one about American imperialist ambitions and 'westernizing' colonization of the Pacific (Hawaii) and East Asia (the Philippines), and another to me more interesting one about U.S.-Japan relations. This review will focus on the latter. James Bradley has done an excellent and well-researched job of presenting the history in detail of the exchanges between Kaneko and Roosevelt, though he seems unaware, or at least does not mention, that Kentaro Kaneko (1853-1942) had already met Theodore Roosevelt before 1904 through an introduction arranged by Harvard-educated William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926), the Bostonian collector of Japanese art. They first met in 1890 when Roosevelt was Head of the Civil Service Commission and Kaneko was returning to Japan via the U.S.

Mr. Bradley's book is provocative, and he certainly scores some legitimate hits on the appalling race politics of Roosevelt's time. But I have two major problems with this book: 1) I am deeply disappointed by the bias evident in the "factual" underpinnings of his thesis; Bradley clearly is massaging the facts to fit his simplistic argument in the same way that a 19th century Social Darwinist would. Two concrete examples: during his brief overview of the Mexican War, Bradley refers to the Neucenes River as the "internationally recognized border", portraying the US presence there as illegal. The reality is significantly more complicated. Following the Battle of San Jacinto, the Mexican president had signed the "treaty" of Velasco (subsequently renounced by Mexico) recognizing the Rio Grande as the border. No other documents ever concluded the Texas Revolution, so it is safe to say that the border situation was ambiguous; if there was any "recognized" border from 1836 to 1846, it was the Rio Grande. Moreover, there certainly was no United Nations corollary in 1836 to provide the imprimatur of "international recognition" - I would be interested to see any documents from European or Asian legations backing up Bradley's claim. Second, during his section on Japan, Bradley repeatedly refers to the "closed" period of Tokugawa Japan as a benevolent time where "the samurai class set down their swords and became teachers", where culture flourished and Japan prospered. Again, the reality is significantly more complicated.

In his book *The Imperial Cruise*, author James Bradley depicts the civilian and military US leaders of the late 19th and early 20th century as racists. He goes to great lengths to describe them all as "Aryans"; a term of high emotional content today. Since World War II, the term is widely associated with the "master race" nonsense promulgated by Hitler. To many, the term today is a much stronger term than it was in T. Roosevelt's time. By using the term Aryan to describe America's leaders of the

early 20th Century, Bradley appears to be implying that they were all racists of the Nazi ilk. He also seems to make a point of suggesting that T. Roosevelt was likely pro-slavery. He points out (p. 36) for no apparent reason, that Roosevelt's 17th century ancestor owned slaves in the Dutch Colony of "New Amsterdam"; presumably implying that TR inherited the same inclinations of his ancestor 200 years later. (Note, that slavery in the 17th century was common in all parts of what is now the United States, including all of the European colonies as well as the areas controlled by the Native Americans (e.g., "Indians"). It was also common in Europe, Asia, and Africa.) As slaves at the time in New Amsterdam were predominately Europeans, not Africans, Bradley's point in mentioning this fact must be to depict TR as pro-slavery. (I suspect Bradley's intent was to add to his implication of TR as a racist, and not to suggest any pro-slavery leanings on TR's part.) That America and its leaders at the time would generally be considered racist in America today is not disputed. However, Bradley seems to want to emphasize that fact. In doing so, he seems to ignore anything that might mitigate his point.

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