

Cultural Missions and Ideological Resources of Japanese Colonialism in Korea*

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I. The Uniqueness of Japanese Colonialism

Perhaps there have been as many forms of colonial rule as colonies. This granted, it is still useful to talk about the uniqueness of Japanese colonial rule, particularly with respect to Korea, *vis-à-vis* Western colonialism. Its uniqueness can be summarized as follows.

1. Japan was an Asian nation which had once fallen under unequal treaties with Western powers. Japan's search for a world order in which it would stand on equal terms with, or supersede, the West shaped the Japanese conception of their 'historical mission' towards Asia;

* 이 글은 The Law and Society Conference, Chicago, May 27-30, 1993, Panel: Culture as Legal Status-The Relevance of Group Identities in Law and Legal Processes I 에서 발표한 내용을 보완 정리한 것입니다.

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2. Japan's geographical proximity and relative cultural affinity to her colonies coloured her strategic concerns and cultural preoccupations in acquiring and governing the colonies. The Japanese themselves proclaimed that their colonial rule was similar to the German occupation of Alsace-Lorraine and was distinct from Britain's relationship with her non-Western dominions.¹⁾ This explains the vigour of the Japanese campaigns towards the "assimilation" of the colonies;
3. Koreans had a language distinct from Japanese and had been governed by a highly unified bureaucratic state for no less than a millenium, during which they had embraced strong "proto-national self-imaginings."²⁾ Moreover, there had been little exchange of people between Korea and Japan. Because of this historical relationship and the hostility of the Koreans to the foreign rule, the Japanese were extorted of enormous effort of military repression and social control in keeping Korea within their empire;
4. The Japanese colonial empire was short-lived. And the military ventures in the continent and the Pacific during this short life further de-

1) Bruce Cumings says that Japan's colonization of Korea was much more comparable to the historical relationship between England and Ireland, or Germany and Poland, than it is to European colonization in Africa or Southeast Asia (Cumings 1984:486). Peattie also compares Japanese colonialism, particularly the expansionism of the 1930s and 40s, to what Hannah Arendt termed 'continental imperialism' found in German and Slavic peoples (Peattie 1984a:120; 123).

2) Because of the uniqueness of the sense the Koreans have as to their ethnicity and nationhood, it is sometimes difficult to talk about the Western notion of nationalism in the Korean setting. Yet I employed Paik Nak-chung's phrase "proto-national self-imaginings," based on Benedict Anderson's conception in his *Imagined Communities* (1991), to denote the sense of collective identity having been shared by pre-colonial Koreans (Paik Nak-chung 1993:75).

prived the Japanese of time and conditions to implement a long-term stable governance in the colonies.³⁾

When colonial rulers perceive a society and people they have colonized and restructure that society on the basis of this perception, they, on one hand, revert and, on the other hand, extend their own self-images. Just as Western liberals created an antithesis to their perception of their own society in their portrayal of colonial natives as 'primitive' and 'undemocratic,' so did the Japanese contrast their 'civilized' features with the 'dormant' and 'unenlightened' states of their colonial subjects and semi-colonial neighbours. Meanwhile, the restructuring of the colonial societies by the Japanese, like in the cases of other colonial powers, reflected the dominant ethos of the ruling nation. What made the situation complex in the Japanese case, however, was the complexity of the Japanese view of their own society. Since the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese experienced a grave tension within their world-view. The tension was between indigenous and imported, or [what they viewed as] Asian and [what they viewed as] Western, cultures, civilizations and societal tenets. To be sure, the Meiji Japanese made enough efforts to settle this conflict in such a way as suggested in Fujioka Sakutaro's following words.

The two chief reforming powers...of modern Japan have been Nationalism and Occidentalism. To the casual observer it would seem that nationalism, which insists on the rejection of foreign civilization and on the retention of

3) Peattie says that the length of the colonial rule was "just long enough for Koreans to recall the national injury suffered at the hands of the Japanese and too short for the effects of Japanese education and assimilation to have taken hold on the loyalties and interests of a younger generation of Koreans" (Peattie 1984a: 46).

national features, and Occidentalism, which admires all things Western and advocates the adoption and imitation of Western enlightenment, are from their very nature incompatible. Yet, strange as it may sound, these two apparently conflicting principles acted hand in hand in fighting the old system and old usages in Japan, and finally succeeded in completely overthrowing the influences which had so long controlled the mind of the nation (Fujioka 1909:444).

Yet if no established ideology or cultural order, being a process rather than a given structure, is free from tensions, ambiguities and inconsistencies within itself (Moore 1978:Ch. 1), the extent of this being the case was far greater in the ethos that shaped Japanese colonialism as well as the principles of governing the Japanese themselves, owing to the diversity of origins of the ideological resources in use⁴⁾ and the complexity of policial priorities and strategic concerns, created by the rapid transformation of the Japanese society and the surrounding international environment.

When the Japanese projected their world-view upon their neighbours through colonial undertakings, the tension took the form of conflict between their self-imposed crusade of leading East Asia to modern civilization and the equally self-imposed mission as the guardians of the traditional East Asian spirit. The two missions co-existed in a synchronic complex from the very outset of the colonial enterprise, but one could also witness a diachronic shift of weight between the two; the latter mission prevailed over the former with Japan's expansion deeper into the Asian continent and to the Pacific.

4) Robert Scalapino says, "At certain points in her modern history, indeed, there was probably a wider ideological spread in Japan than in any society of the so-called civilized world"(Scalapino 1964:108).

II. Assimilation and Discrimination

The Japanese declared that their prime principle of colonial policy was assimilation. At the time of the annexation of Korea in 1910, Governor-General Terauchi said in his address,

It is a natural and inevitable course of things that the two peoples whose countries are in close proximity with each other, whose interests are identical and who are bound together with brotherly feelings, should amalgamate and form one body (quoted in Dong 1973: 153).

The assimilation policy was predicated on the evolutionary view of civilization imported to Japan from the West and, simultaneously, on the Japanese self-consciousness of the Asian provenance of their colonial rule. The Meiji Japanese entertained the sort of conception articulated by Fukuzawa Yukichi, the liberal and pro-Western ideologue for the Meiji reforms, that civilization was to develop from the barbarism of Africa through the half-civilized states of East Asia to civilized Europe and North America (Craig 1968:108;124). From this it followed that, since Japan's Far Eastern colonies, particularly Korea and Taiwan, were already at the half-civilized stage just as pre-Meiji Japan had been, their assimilation to civilized Japanese culture was possible if the Japanese guidance provided an effective momentum for a take-off.⁵⁾ At the same time, the Japanese believed that there was both culturally and racially an indissoluble bond between themselves and their East Asian neighbours, all of whom were to be subject to

5) Fukuzawa had a keen interest in the coup d'état of 1884 in Korea by young intellectuals who tried to engineer Korea along the path similar to that taken by the Meiji Japanese.

the authority of the emperor (Peattie 1984a:40). Thus the Japanese rule was characterized by slogans such as *isshi dojin* (regarding as one and treating with impartiality) and *naichi encho* (*rattachment*). The colonial government in Korea, to highlight this characteristic feature of its governance of Korea, counterposed its style to the British rule in India, in which where a separate framework of government was provided for the Indians (Komatsu 1915:13).

Yet the logic of assimilation immediately faced the challenge of political necessities. The greatest difficulty was related to the status of the colonies within the Japanese constitutional order. The official view of the Japanese was that Korea, Taiwan and Karafuto were under the jurisdiction of the Meiji Constitution. In rationalizing this principle of *naichi encho*, Hara Takashi, who later served as prime minister of Japan, commented,

In foreign countries, the constitution of the ruling state does not apply to its colonies. It is because of the racial distinctness and low cultural levels of the latter in comparison with the former....Yet, in the Japanese case, there is no racial difference and the difference in the levels of culture, if there is any, is not that large. Since there is not such a large difference as in European colonialism, it is not right to call it [Taiwan] a colony (quoted in Akihara 1971:3).

At first, the colonial authorities in Taiwan were against the exclusive legislative power of the Imperial Diet as to colonial affairs, which theoretically stemmed from the reading of Article 5 of the Constitution, even up to the point of questioning the very applicability of the constitution to the colony. The Tokyo government quashed the Taiwan colonial government's at-

tempt to secure autonomous legislative power and confirmed that the constitution applied to Taiwan. In return, however, it mandated to the governor-general of Taiwan the power to issue ordinances having the same effect as statute.⁶⁾ This was a temporary arrangement to last only for three years, but it was renewed a number of times until was made perpetual in 1921. As regards Korea, the Japanese provided almost the same arrangement, yet with the omission of the three-year duration provision (Chen 1984).⁷⁾ This arrangement of delegated legislation, however, was seen by many as exceeding the scope of delegation contemplated by the constitution. Unlike the Taiwanese who used this as ammunition in their struggle against Japanese rule, Koreans, who were almost exclusively concerned with outright independence, did not take issue with this. This question, nevertheless, prompted diverse views to be put forward among the circles of Japanese jurists, in which the question whether Taiwan and Korea were within the jurisdiction of the Meiji Constitution was continually raised. Some constitutional lawyers like Minobe Tatsukichi made a strong case against the idea that the constitution applied to the overseas territories (Nakamura 1958: 182-189). After all, the row revealed the instability of the legal logic of *naichi encho*.

Another constitutional issue pertained to political participation of the colonial subjects. If the principle of assimilation was strictly observed, it would naturally follow that the colonial subjects were to have the right to elect their representatives to the legislature of the empire, as was the case

6) Law Concerning Laws and Regulations to Be Enforced In Taiwan [better known as Law 63], enacted in 1896.

7) Law Concerning Laws and Regulations to Be Enforced in Korea [Law 30], enacted in 1910.

in Algeria under French rule. Another way of answering this question was the British method, by which the colonies had their own legislative councils independent of the British government. Again, Koreans enthused about neither of the two ideas, while there was a substantially strong campaign for a Taiwan congress. The Japanese government regarded the latter method as dangerous because it might let the colonies slip out of its control and as at variance with the principle of *naichi encho*. Meanwhile, there was some consideration on the idea of admitting colonial representatives to the Imperial Diet. The idea was aborted, however, with the assassination of its most powerful advocate, Premier Hara Takashi (Peattie 1984a: 29; 1984b: 106-108). No matter whether allowing political participation in this manner would have been good or bad for the destinies of the colonized people, the question which Koreans would certainly answer in the negative (cf. Kang Tong-jin 1980: Ch.3), the Japanese had to establish a rationale for not doing so. The justification of the Japanese government, however, was political rather than legal. Although the constitution applied to Korea, it held, a specific statutory arrangement was needed in order to bring Koreans actually to the ballot box and yet, considering the "low cultural level" of the Koreans, the government decided to wait until the condition was ripe (Akihara 1971: 10). While those like Hara Takashi predicated the policy of assimilation on the postulate that Korean culture was proximate to that of the Japanese and that the Koreans were a relatively civilized people, the relationship between the necessity as well as viability of assimilation and the evaluation of the so-called "level of civilization" could be established in many other permutations. Minobe, when he argued against the applying of the constitution to the overseas territories, believed that the colonies had cultural levels very different from the Japanese—a solution opposite to Hara's,

based on an opposite evaluation of the fact (cf. Akihara 1971:10). Secondly, a journalist named Yoshino Sakuzo argued that assimilation was inappropriate for “a people of a relatively advanced culture” and that the Koreans were such a people (Peattie 1984b:105)—a solution opposite to Hara’s, but based on a similar evaluation of the fact. Thirdly, a radical assimilationist named Aoyagi Tsunataro claimed that Japan needed a far more aggressive effort of assimilation because the Korean national character was too inferior to that of the Japanese. According to Aoyagi, “Korean history was a raw material of disgrace” and “Koreans were deferential to the strong, and were cunning and cowardly,” while “Japanese history was built on a grand cause and virtue” and the Japanese were “brave and chivalrous.” Since Korea and Japan were exactly on the reverse side of each other, he said, a routine way of assimilation would not work. Therefore Japan had to adopt more aggressive assimilation policies including obliterating the Korean language and deliberately mixing Koreans with a massive army of Japanese immigrants to the peninsula (Aoyagi 1923:125-129). Thus Aoyagi’s solution contradicted Hara’s in both respects—the evaluation of the fact and the direction of the policy.

III. Civilization and Discipline

It is often pointed out that Japanese colonialism, on the whole, lacked the kind of missionary spirit found in British and French colonial enterprises (Kublin 1959:77 Gann 1984:502). To be sure, Japanese launches had never been initiated by anyone equivalent to the European missionaries who ventured to enter alien lands with evangelical aspirations. Yet it is an exaggeration to say that the Japanese never made any attempt to cloak their interference with other peoples’ destinies with any proclaimed mission of en-

lightening them. Amid the euphoria following their successful renovation of their country along the path dictated by the universal “trends of the times,” the Japanese imposed on themselves a *mission civilisatrice* towards their Far Eastern neighbours (Peattie 1984a:9; 1984b:92). Takekoshi Yosaburo claimed that the Westerners were not the only people deserving the mission of delivering civilization.

Western nations have long believed that on their shoulders alone rested the responsibility of colonizing the yet-unopened portions of the globe and extending to the inhabitants the benefits of civilization; but now we Japanese, rising from the ocean in the extreme Orient, which as a nation to take part in this great and glorious work (quoted in Peattie 1984b:83).

Count Okuma Shigenobu, one of the most influential champions of modernization, also declared,

We desire, by the cooperation of our Anglo-Saxon friends, to engage in a glorious humanitarian work of civilizing and developing two Oriental nations [China and Korea] now deeply sunk in misery, so that they, too, may someday be able to write semi-centennial stories of progress as we are now doing (quoted in Hackett 1965:247).

Then, what was the civilization the Japanese thought of presenting to their “miserable” friends and through what means? In appearance, liberty and freedom were inserted in the catalogue of the civilization gift. Nitobe Inazo, the expert on colonial policy who later became vice-secretary-general of the League of Nations, remarked,

Foremost among the ideas borrowed from the West must be enumerated civil liberty and its concomitant—popular representation.....Thus did the English idea of liberty find easy entrance among us. Not only was it assured among our own selves, but we became its torch-bearers on the Asia tic continent. It was to rescue Korea from the successive tyranny of two despotic powers [China and Russia] that our two recent wars were fought. Woe to us if the banner unfurled in Freedom's cause should be stained with the blood of the people over and for whom it was raised! (Nitobe 1909:469;471)

Yet, unlike what Nitobe said, civil liberty and popular representation as well as the so-called English idea of liberty hardly found easy entrance to Japan, let alone to her colonies. The rulers of Meiji Japan defined their goal to be “enriching the country and strengthening the army” and identified “civilization and enlightenment”(*bunmei kaika*) with standing on a par, in terms of wealth and military strength, with leading Western powers on the world stage. To achieve this they needed a system geared towards the concentration of national energy and that system was a hybrid of a German *Rechtstaat* and a paternalistic imperial hierarchy elevated to a mythical status. The principle of social order thus set out found the most succinct expression in the Imperial Rescript on Education which based all moral instruction since 1890.

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof..... Ye, Our subjects,..always respect the Con

stitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State...(Tsunoda *et al* eds. 1964 : 139-140).

Hence it was discipline of this kind rather than the mainstream liberal notion of civil liberty – if we forget for a moment the question possibly raised nowadays concerning the mythical character of such a notion – that the Japanese wanted to share with other East Asians. And the only way of doing so was through force, since peace could be enjoyed “only when all countries reach[ed] the same level of civilization.”⁸⁾

The colonial administrators found an accomplishment of their civilizing mission in tightening social discipline. A colonial official in Korea noted in his article entitled “The Essential Meaning of Governing Korea,”

The new administrative work in Korea is similar to the reform following our Meiji Restoration..... By the time of our Restoration, the populace, like the Koreans, had been in great misery..... Dangers to life and property were so endemic that living was like a candle in the wind..... Korea's past was very much similar to this..... A wife could openly live with an adulterer after murdering her husband, and such was an age-old immoral practice. Yet today...the institution of civilization does not tolerate this. The two culprits are ceaselessly traced until arrested and put to death (Komatsu 1915 : 14).

If discipline was a common goal for the Japanese and the colonial subjects, the means to attain it had to differ because there was difference in the lev-

8) Quoted from a *Mainichi* editorial on the annexation of Korea in Jansen (1984 : 77).

els of development. According again to Takekoshi Yosaburo,

the short-sighted politicians imagine that the mere possession of a colonial land should enable a nation to transplant bodily and with success the civilization of the motherland, or that by importing the learnings of the motherland the character of the natives of the colony can be transformed. They make various attempts at governing a colony under this false notion. We of the latter-day school of the science of government firmly believe that the government of a colony cannot go beyond biological laws; that is, in governing Formosa, for instance, we must govern the Formosans not as we do the Japanese, but as we should the Formosans....In the main the policy of the Japanese Government toward Korea has ever been to govern that country in a way to suit the Koreans themselves (Takekoshi 1914:97-98).

Therefore different motivations had to be given to the colonial subjects; Nitobe stressed, "Merely being kind [to colonial subjects] is insufficient. Primitive peoples are motivated by awe" (quoted in Peattie 1984b:88). To motivate the colonial subjects in a way that suited them, the Japanese preserved and expanded the use of flogging, which had ceased to be exercised in Japan in 1882.

In order to understand the reason for the flogging legislation in today's Korea, we may look at the background in Taiwan of its legislations for fines and flogging, which were modelled after. There, flogging was adopted despite strong opposition, because incarceration would not inflict any suffering on the natives who lacked any sense of shame and capacity of reasonable thinking and whose living standards were low.

..If the spread of education promoted virtue and intellect and the economic development enhanced the level of the people, we might be able to see a change to the current situation, yet if a best punishment to replace this were not found the current system of flogging would enjoy a long future (Chosen sotokufu shihobu kangokuka 1917: II 82-83).

Thus, to 'enlighten' the colonial subjects this 'unenlightened' way of punishment was necessary because they were not 'enlightened' enough to deserve better treatment. In fact the colonial government did not necessarily regard flogging as so 'unenlightened.' Against mounting criticisms on the Flogging Ordinance, the Government-General defended flogging in the following terms.

We understand that by trend flogging is becoming less popular. This is based on the idea that flogging is barbaric and is a violation of human rights.....[Yet] the very essence of punishment lies in what the polemics call violation of human rights. It is said that flogging is barbaric because it treats human-beings just like animals..... But, since carceral institutions, too, are no different from zoos..flogging should not be rejected simply because it is barbaric and violative of human rights..... In short, the rejection of flogging is a temporary phenomenon emanating from an idea of human rights in a revolutionary era and is not by any means rational (Chosen sotokufu shihobu kangokuka 1917: I 52).

But as nationwide anti-colonial demonstrations broke out in March 1919, the government decided to scrap the Flogging Ordinance, adding some regrets and an exhortation as follows.

Westerners say that flogging is suitable only to unenlightened peoples. Yet, since it is common both in the East and the West that parents slap their children when they behave wrongly, it is rather stupid of those Westerners to say whether it is wrong or not for the government to flog its people, while they bash their children. The abolition of flogging is natural, following the development of the people's intellect and the progress of culture. If, however, people do not appreciate this and commit crimes more frequently or take punishment lightly, there will be regrets on both sides—the government and the people. May the people respect the aim of the government in abolishing flogging by cultivating their culture and regarding injury to their minds and honour as a shame greater than physical suffering! (*Tonga Ilbo*, April 1, 1920:3).

Inherent in the justifications for unequal treatment between the Japanese and the colonial subjects were the notions of “degree of culture,” “level of civilization” or “level of the people.” The last notion, “level of the people” or *mindō*, which was very frequently used in governmental discourses, implied that different populations deserved different treatments according to their abilities of acquiring civic virtues, which the state could and should deliberately nurture through education. All these notions presupposed that there was a uniform way of measuring ethnic groups' capacities and dignity, based on which it was natural that their seats in the world were accorded.

When the colonial government was forced by the resistance of Koreans as well as by international pressure to relax its tight control of the first decade, which the colonial administrators themselves characterized as “military rule” or *budan seiji*, and to adopt “cultural rule” or *bunka seiji*, it ex

plained the course of events in terms of the progress of *mindō* (Chosen sotokufu 1923:9). The advanced “level of the people,” it said, prompted reforms such as the abolition of the gendarmerie, making civilians eligible for the office of governor-general, lifting the licence restriction for corporate firms and giving permissions for Korean vernacular press. Although the tradition of appointing top military commanders to the office of governor-general was unbroken and the police reform resulted in an even larger number of policemen, *bunka seiji* created some favourable conditions for Korean nationalism to strengthen. Exchange of ideas and information through the press and similar cultural activities greatly promoted the kind of social communication which Karl Deutsch underlines as the most significant prerequisite for modern nationalism (Deutsch 1966). There was also notable growth of left-wing labour and peasant movements. This series of development, which should have been conceived of as a sign of modern civilization in its standard notion, brought serious concerns to the Japanese rulers. Meanwhile, material improvement, which the Japanese viewed as another decisive indication of civilization, faced a stalemate, as the Rice Production Increase Plan was ruined by a series of recessions and finally by the Great Depression. These predicaments faced in Korea paralleled the challenges of Taisho democracy in metropolitan Japan, wherein the Japanese came to experience universal manhood suffrage, party politics and noisy marketplaces of liberal and socialist ideas, in which many saw the emergence of a society where, in Harootunian's expression, “class, social order, and state would stand in a relationship of clear counterpoint and tension to each other” (Harootunian 1974:4).

IV. Towards the Pan-Asian Mission

Since the arrival of Commodore Perry, the Japanese were obsessed with their security and place in the world. The strongest force that moved the Meiji man's mind was the desire to put his country on the ranks of the world's leading powers. The attitudes of the Japanese towards Western civilization in the mid-Meiji period were coloured, on one hand, with natural reservations about alien cultures and, on the other hand, with the pride that they were riding the universal tide of modernization. Yet, as they became convinced that the imported elements served well their goal of enhancing economic and military strength, the reservations much dissipated and their sense of belonging to the same group as the Western powers, separately from the rest of Asia, became clearer. Fukuzawa Yukichi cried out for *datsu-A*, that is, departure from Asia, in order for the Japanese no longer to be captives of the decaying tradition of East Asia (Craig 1968; Miwa 1968). When the Japanese fought the Chinese in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, some even called it a "battle for the sake of world culture" (Keene 1971:127) or a "clash between European culture and East Asian culture" in which Japan represented the former (Iriye 1970:137). Fukuzawa Yukichi interpreted Japan's comfortable victory in the war as a "victory of civilization over barbarism" (Craig 1968:136). As a result of this war, Japan acquired a colony—Taiwan—, which the Japanese regarded as a decisive indication that they now truly became a member of the world's 'gentlemen's club.' Japan's colonial policy until the end of the 1920s was strongly based on the perception that the Japanese were the champions of progress in East Asia, who had the mission of leading the East Asians along the path first discovered by the West and followed by themselves.

In the early 1930s, however, the Japanese had to review their place in the

world. They found that the world was being divided into hostile blocs in the aftermath of the Great Depression and that the West treated the Japanese with antagonism rather than as a trustworthy partner in partitioning the world. When the Western powers tried to curb the Japanese attempt of further aggrandizement through aggression in Manchuria, the Japanese seceded from the League of Nations. The Japanese apprehension was not new. Indeed, from early on, Japan had never been free from the fear of Western interference. The Triple Intervention by three Western powers—Germany, France and Russia—following the Sino-Japanese War forced the Japanese to give up what they had just gained in Liaotung. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904 was a war against a European nation who sought to take control over the land of so much strategic importance as to be called a “dagger pointing at Japan,” that is, Korea. Internally, social order was seen as breaking down because of the vociferation of Taisho democracy. The left wing was creating grave anxiety, if not physically threatening.

Driven by such external and internal challenges, the Japanese began to rethink their identity, or, if you like, to stabilize their hitherto unstable identity as regards culture, civilization and history, and redefine their national mission. This self-reflection involved a reconsideration of the meanings of the two fundamental directions of their culture and civilization. The Meiji Japanese had bifurcated the imported and the indigenous, or the Western and the Asian, elements of culture, but had tried to reconcile the two. One solution of reconciliation was “Japanese essence with Western instruments,” alluded to in Ito Hirobumi’s following remark: “what was lacking in our country men of the feudal era was not mental or moral fibre, but the scientific, technical, and materialistic side of modern civilization” (Ito 1909:124). Yet there simultaneously was the caution against confining the

Western imports to the material side. Nitobe Inazo asked, "Is it true that we have nothing to learn of the West in morals and morality? Do we exploit the best in Europe when we borrow its systems of law, of education, and of industry?," and answered, "The greatest influence of the West is, after all, the spiritual"(Nitobe 1909:473).

The pre-war Showa Japanese, by contrast, could hardly hear any admiration of the Western spirit. Things Western worthy of borrowing now became understood exclusively in terms of material instrumentality. And there was extreme caution against the spiritual imports from the West. All the evils of industrial society were attributed to bad influences from the West. The conflict inherent in the ethos of the post-Restoration Japanese now became neatly configured as between healthy Japanese tradition and Western *decadence*. The national mission of the Japanese was to preserve the spiritual purity of traditional Japan, the repository of which had been the rural village, the national polity being its expanded replica. The regimentation of the rural population, indeed, had begun in the Meiji era through the organization of local reservist associations designed by the Satsuma-Choshu military oligarchs (Smethurst 1974). Such organizations were accorded a more extensive function of ideological control under the ultra-nationalism and militarism of the 1930s and 40s.

This development of events was replicated in the colonies. In Korea, the colonial government regarded Korean nationalist and popular movements very much as a product of foreign agitation. If Koreans' low *mindō* in the early stage of the colonial rule had been correlated to lack of education and ignorance of the "trends of the times," now it was associated with misunderstanding the "trends of the times" and the blind following of *decadent* Western ideologies. Here too, therefore, the population had to be led to-

wards the essential spirit of East Asia. Governor-General Ugaki Kazushige, a former member of Yamagata Aritomo's school of Satsuma-Choshu military oligarchs, launched the Rural Improvement Movement on the ruins of the ruined Rice Production Increase Plan, demanding the improvement of "mind-fields" in addition to the improvement of agricultural production. According to this idea, human mind was a field to be cultivated as much as rice fields were, in order to reach spiritual maturity, which could be attained only through loyalty to the imperial order deeply rooted in the glory of Japan's past history. Under the guidance of the colonial government were built the Rural Improvement Associations, which organized labour into village cooperative units and indoctrinated the residents towards what the government proclaimed to be Asian virtues—hard work, thrift, self-sacrifice, deference to the imperial command, etc. The Government-General of Korea stressed the significance of this movement in the following words.

Originally, Oriental thoughts and philosophies have been predicated on spiritual culture and spiritual life. Hence it is needless to say that *zyunoshugi* (agrarianism)⁹⁾ or *nohon seishin* ("agriculture-as-the-base" idea) has formed the base and the mainstream of idea, economy, and every other aspect of our society. However, with the influx of Western civilization came the dazzling features of material civilization that flabbergasted our eyes and ears. As a result, capitalism is being blindly upheld and belief in the omnipotence of money economy and superiority of urban culture is prevailing. Materialistic thoughts and plutocracy have eroded politics, economy, and every other aspect of our society, and spiritual life and *nohon*

9) The term *zyunoshugi* usually denotes physiocracy, but here this translation must be avoided so that it is not identified with Quesnay's physiocracy.

seishin are disappearing..... The idea of the present movement is to save agrarian communities from the pressures of the incorrect thought trends of capitalism, plutocracy and urban supremacy, to perfect their autonomous ideals and organizations, and to construct a healthy and happy society on the basis of *nohon seishin* (Chosen sotokufu 1936: 64-65).

Japanese colonialists had initially entertained the stereotyped Western view of the primitive village community in explaining the backwardness of Korean society. But now they came to portray the village community as the home of their ultimate spiritual goal.

The Japanese mission towards the East Asians was no longer a *mission civilisatrice* of the Western connotation. It was now the mission of protecting the East Asians from “venal, *decadent* and unjust” Western colonialism (Peattie 1984: 124). The world was now on a stage of war between white and coloured peoples. The “yellow races,” who had been passively subdued by the West, were to unite under the banner of pan-Asianism (Najita 1988). The Japanese colonial empire was declared to be elevated to the Greater East-Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere encompassing China and Southeast Asia.

What the Japanese meant by Asian, however, meant Japanese. The Asian unity meant Japanese predominance. The mission to preserve the Asian essence meant effacing particular characteristics of individual cultures. The assimilation policy towards Korea developed into the more radical policy of *kominka* or “imperialization” under the slogan of *naisen ittai* (Japan and Korea as a single entity). Earlier mentioned Aoyagi Tsunataro’s proposal for an aggressive assimilation finally came to fruition, as the colonial government abolished Korean-language instruction in schools and jailed those involved in compiling a Korean dictionary by applying the

Peace Preservation Law. The government also forced Koreans to change their names in accordance with Japanese name patterns.¹⁰⁾

The ideas of *isshi dojin* and *naisen ittai* required the colonial subjects to perform their duties to the imperial order, which the term *kokutai*, having been in use since pre-Meiji times, encapsulated. *Kokutai* may be translated as the 'form of the state' or 'national polity.' But this letter-to-letter translation can never serve our inquiry into what it really meant in Imperial Japan. The standard interpretation of *kokutai* in Japan was that it was the national basis centring on the imperial authority "unbroken for ages eternal" (Minear 1970:64ff.). Whether this concept could be used as a legal terminology was indeed problematic. Minobe Tatsukichi, who held that the emperor was nothing but an organ of the state, denied it any relevance to law (Minear 1970:66). But it was Minobe's belief that was later confessed to be irrelevant to the national cause, pressured by the government and right-wingers. The Peace Preservation Law of 1925, which also applied to Korea, made it a crime to undertake organized activities in subversion against *kokutai*. Here, as Minear implied, the term was used in a polemical and negative manner to denounce the variety of ideas regarded as "un-Japanese" (Minear 1970:68). The 1941 amendment of the Peace Preservation Law added a phrase to penalize any act of forming or joining associations with the purpose of desecrating the emperor.

Another implication of the pan-Asian unity was that the colonial subjects were required to support the war effort. As the empire entered into the phase of the "national mobilization," the colonial government imple-

10) The ordinances concerning the change of names did not make the change compulsory, but the government discriminated those who refused in every aspect of social life — schooling, employment, food-rationing, etc. (Suzuki 1988:416-418).

mented various legal devices to mobilize economic resources and labour forces. To avoid the hazard of recruiting disloyal elements into the military, general conscription was not carried out until the year before the collapse of the empire, though volunteers had been recruited from the late 30s. When the government decided to conscript, it described the decision as a favour for the Koreans, the government bravely risking the challenge of the question whether it was not the time to give the Koreans, who were doing all their duties, rights of political participation – the question Koreans were hardly interested in (cf. Tanaka 1970:222-226).

V. Epilogue

Those who engineered the modernization of pre-war Japan were conscious that they were given a large variety of ideologico-cultural resources which they could freely make use of. Nitobe Inazo acclaimed, “Thus has Japan selected the best that the West can give, while retaining what the East can least afford to spare”(Nitobe 1909:472). Scholars on Japanese modernization talk about the “autonomy of choice” (Burks 1968). To be sure, the Japanese “did not come into the modern world *tabula rasa*” (Scalapino 1964:93). Their orienting of their actions were undoubtedly shaped, and the usability of each ideological resource was bound, by the inertial pressure of their past history. The leaders, nevertheless, selected their goals, the means to attain them and the ideological resources to rationalize them, perhaps as deliberately as unsurpassed in any other modernization process. It is this deliberateness that characterized Japanese colonialism *vis-à-vis* colonialisms in other parts of the world (Peattie 1984a).

Yet, was the ideological world presented to the Japanese simply a deliberate construction of the leaders? Did the public merely follow the commands

in fear of repression to make the official ideologies dominant? Morley stresses that it was not simply those convicted at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, nor a larger circle of landlords, monopoly capitalists or whatever power holders, that drove Japan to a certain direction (Morley 1971). Against Barrington Moore's assumption that the agrarian collectivism of the inter-war years owed decisively to the agrarian ruling strata's defence of their class interests (Moore 1966:Ch.5), Dore-Ouchi and Wasmo point out that the idea had far more support among working farmers than one would imagine (Dore and Ouchi 1971; Wasmo 1988). Likewise, pan-Asianism and Japan's direction since the 30s were not simply executed by military-industrial oligarchs, theoretically in Leninist terms the sole exploiters of fascism and imperialist aggression, but had a fairly wide support from the public. Ordinary Japanese had their own interest, apart from the goal of the leaders, of enjoying what Bourdieu terms "social capital" (Bourdieu 1986), that is, the honour of belonging to a prestigious group—in this context, the Japanese nation *vis-à-vis* other ethnic groups within the empire and peoples they were going to conquer. Even many of those who had enthused about Leninist appeals later chose to support the state's ambition, despite the fact that the Peace Preservation Law heavily punished any subversion against the institution of private property. If they did, on the first hand, in fear of the iron fist of the state, they could also be comforted by and indeed sought comfort from the ideological elements apparently in support of struggles against Anglo-American imperialism and the liberation of have-not nations.¹¹⁾ An ideological resource turns into a hege-

11) A substantial portion of left-wing intellectuals in today's Japan, who continue to entertain the vision of Asian solidarity, take subtle attitudes towards the pan-Asian appeal of the pre-war period (Morley 1971:17).

monic ideology, either by itself alone or combined with other resources, when it is drawn on by members of society in their actions towards certain goals and through these actions is structured into more or less a solid pattern, if not to the degree of solidity in what Bourdieu terms *habitus*, wherein the motivation and the strategic moment of the action are completely blurred (Bourdieu 1977).

If pan-Asianism gained some hegemonic status among the Japanese public, how was it treated by Koreans? Of course, Koreans were required to openly uphold it and its concomitant logic of *naisen ittai*. Indeed, some intellectuals demonstrated, at least in appearance, fairly strong enthusiasm about it. Yi Kwang-su, who turned from a nationalist novelist into one of the most ardent pro-Japanese propaganda men, said,

Naichi people [metropolitan Japanese] would worry about Koreans becoming Japanese, because this would deprive their privileges *vis-à-vis* the Koreans.....[Yet] whether to allow *naisen ittai* depends on the lofty mind of the emperor and is not something to be commented on by the *naichi* people. That Koreans become members of the *naichi*, true sons of the emperor, on the basis of *issai dojin*, is a grace blessingly extended to us by the imperial command of Emperor Meiji (quoted in Miyada 1988:367-368).

Koreans on the upper echelons of the colonial society were constantly dismayed by the continuing contempt and discrimination of the Japanese against them. They were therefore induced, like Yi Kwang-su, to invoke *naisen ittai* so as to put themselves on the status equal to the Japanese. The apologies, however, of most of the intellectuals who one way or another supported Japanese rule were that anyone who had his foot on Korean soil

could hardly resist the government's persistent extortion of open loyalty with the iron fist. On the whole, Koreans had sufficiently strong 'national self-imaginings' not to find much benefit of stabilizing their identity by attaching themselves psychologically to the empire. Bruce Cumings asserted, "Japan's attempt at legitimating the colonial enterprise in Korea always struck Koreans as absurd. Koreans had nothing for which to thank them and the liquidation of Korean sovereignty for which to hate them, along with their Korean collaborators..... Japan colonized a state, not a people" (Cumings 1984:486).

Yet the limited hegemony of Japanese colonial ideology was the case not only with regard to the Koreans but also with respect to the rest of East Asia. As Lewis Gann said, pan-Asianism could never be reconciled with Japanese ethnocentricity (Gann 1984:517). It sounded too self-serving even to those Asians who were fighting against Western colonial rulers whom the Japanese swore to shatter. An Indochinese patriot who had set up his base for anti-French struggle in Japan declared that Japan "superseded all the European powers as the most dangerous enemy of Asia" (Duus 1988:8).

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