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JAPANESE TRAVELLERS' ACCOUNTS OF KOREA

 Sonia Ryang

Travellers and Travels

Images of Japanese imperialism in general and Japan's colonial rule in Korea in particular usually derive from severe economic extortion and land usurpation, violent suppression of the 1919 Independence Uprising, and forced cultural assimilation, notably represented by the attempt to abolish Korean names and the mass mobilization of Korean workers for the Japanese war efforts. The militaristic nature of the Japanese Government-General in Korea—it being often cited as a “proof-positive” that the Governors-General were either army or navy officers—is another point of discussion about Korea the colony, where people were deprived of basic human rights, not to mention access to education and information. Images are thus atrocious and oppressive.¹ These images are a reflection of the attempt to totalize the history of Japanese colonial rule in Korea by capturing it in bird's-eye view.²

What I am interested in exploring in this article is to leave the totalization aside and shift our attention to a field where aspects of colonialism allow us to entertain a richer analysis, in the hope that such a detour will widen the range of discussion on the colonial past and its relation to the postcolonial present of both the colonizer and the colonized. I shall try to do so by using notions and perceptions embodied in Japanese travellers' accounts of Korea during the years 1910 to 1945, with an emphasis on the 1910s to the 1930s.³ This is a study of a textualized field of colonial discourse, my particular focus being on how this field of discourse functions and what it valorizes.

It is true, as Said wrote, that “the imperial map *did* license the cultural vision,”⁴ but complex and complicated processes were at play. For colonial transculturation was often a process that involved the participation of multiple parties, subdivided internally beyond the simple dichotomy of colonized and colonizer.⁵ Travel texts dealt with in this article were addressed to the metropolitan readership and gave hardly any consideration to the

I wish to thank Professor Tessa Morris-Suzuki of the Australian National University for her comments and suggestions for the article as well as her constant intellectual encouragement from which I have benefited immensely. I wish also to thank the anonymous reader for *East Asian History*, whose comments were very helpful in revising the article. The Toyota Foundation funded the research trip to Japan which enabled me to obtain data for this article and for which I am grateful.

¹ See, for example, Hatada Takashi, *Chōsen no rekishi* [A history of Korea] (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1974) and Yabu Keizō, *Chōsen Sōtokufu no rekishi* [A history of the Government-General of Korea] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1994).

² See, for example, Ramon Myers and Mark Peattie, eds, *The Japanese colonial empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

³ All the materials used in this article are found in the Imperial Library Collection of the National Diet Library of Japan. All the translations are mine. When Korean names are quoted in a Japanese text, these are transliterated according to Japanese pronunciation, otherwise they are transliterated following the original pronunciation, as in Pusan (Korean) and Fuzan (Japanese). It should be mentioned that there were non-Japanese travelers to pre-colonial and /●VER

power relations

/Korea (e.g. Isabella Bird, *Korea and her neighbours* [London: KPI, 1985], and Sten Bergman, *In Korean wilds and villages* [London: Travel Book Club, 1938]), but these are not dealt with here and are left for further study. It would also be interesting to consider in future the gender and social background of the population travelling between the colony and the metropolis.

⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth, Mddlx.: Penguin, 1987).

⁵ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁶ Korean voices are not represented in this article because of the conceptual scope of the article as well as the lack of matching texts, since not many Koreans wrote about their travels in Japan (see n.21 below). In this sense, what Pratt innovatively calls “autoethnographic expression” (*Imperial eyes*, p.7) involving collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the colonizer by the colonized occurs in the context of Korean travel writing mainly in the post-colonial connection.

Korean readership in the colony.⁶ Travel to Korea the colony by the metropolitan Japanese was prefigured by the power imbalance between the colonizer and the colonized. For this reason, travellers' accounts of Korea are necessarily a partial representation, far from “truth” of any kind, and can only be dealt with as a body of texts forming, and emerging from, a certain discursive field consisting of interpretation and narration. In approaching this body of material critically, I intend to approximate my contention to historical anthropology—more precisely, the anthropology of colonialism—by way of raising the issue of colonialism as a culture.

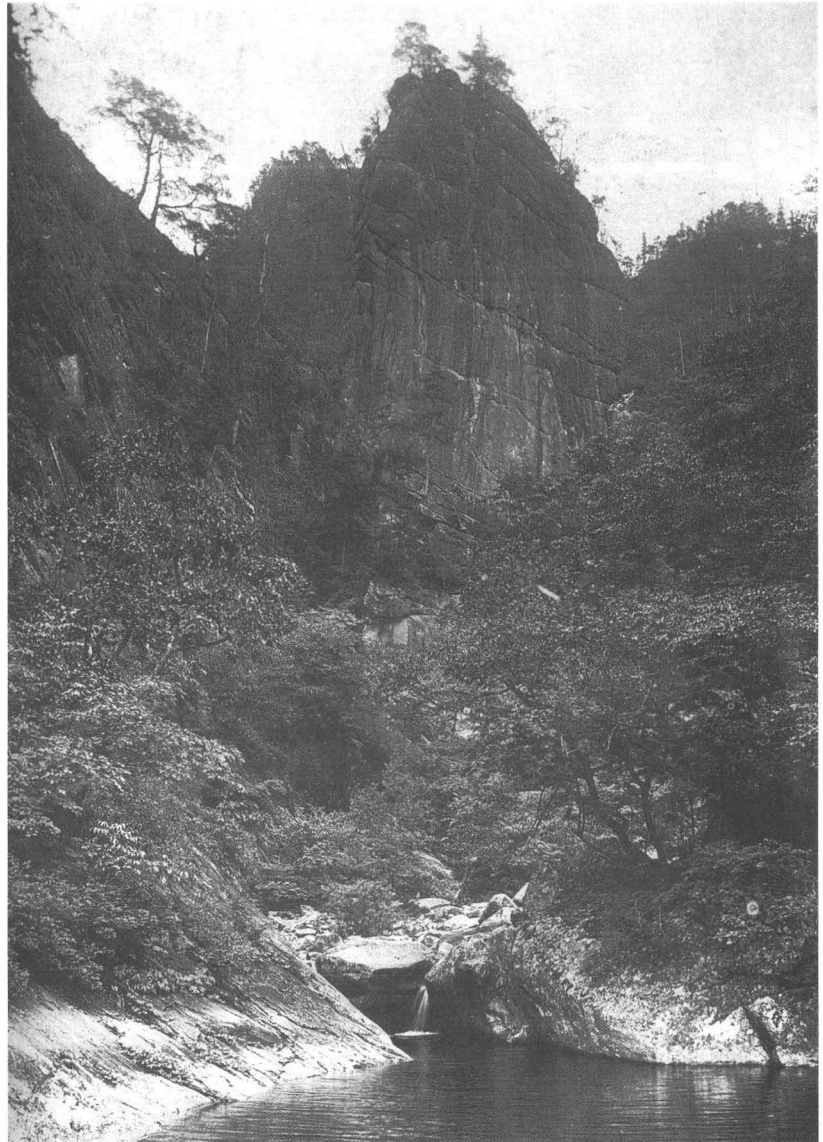


Figure 1

Myōngyōngdae in Kūmgang mountains, eastern central Korea (the source of all photographs in this article is Sajinūro Ponūn Kūndae Hanguk [Old days of Korea through pictures], 2 vols [Seoul: Sōmundang, 1986]; here, vol.2, p.117)

So, who travelled to colonial Korea from the imperial metropolis? Firstly, there were professional writers of novels and journals produced specifically for publication, who often went under the auspices of a particular publisher or even with the publisher in person as a guide. Many books produced in this way had *furigana* 振仮名 vernacular reading aids appended to every *kanji* 漢字 in the text, which reflected a publishing marketing strategy to attract as wide a readership as possible.

Travel-text publication went hand-in-hand with the promotion of tourism by the government-run South Manchuria Railway Company and the Railway Bureau of the Korean Government-General, “Mantetsu” 滿鉄 and “Sentetsu” 鮮鉄 respectively. This brings us to the second group of visitors to Korea—notably, tourists. Mantetsu and Sentetsu maintained branch offices in Shimonoseki, a port city in south-western Honshu, which facilitated packaged tours and distributed relevant information. They advertised Korea as an attractive tourist resort, in contrast to more widely-held perceptions of it as being backward, unenjoyable and inferior to the metropolis. When the Seoul Exposition was held in 1929, for example, the Mantetsu Shimonoseki office organized a packaged tour for a total of 205 persons from all over Japan including journalists, lawyers, farmers, artists, medical doctors, housewives, and merchants, both male and female and ranging in age from their twenties to their sixties. The Mantetsu tourist bureau collected the comments of these tour participants which were subsequently edited and produced as a travel guide-book that was later used to promote new tourist ventures.⁷

Thirdly, there were bureaucrats, teachers and education-related personnel who visited the peninsula. The purpose of their trips was labelled *shisatsu* 視察, inspection. Following the annexation, how and what to teach school pupils about Korea became a challenging task for the Japanese education authorities, since Korea now fell under the umbrella of Japan's national geography. Schoolteachers had to educate themselves as much as their students about the new colony. Their trips tended to concentrate on school inspections and assessing the academic ability of Korean children. According to the Japanese National Diet Library catalogues, cities and regions including Yonezawa, Sado, Sapporo, Hyogo, Amagasaki, Kobe and Ehime, among others, now sent *shisatsudan* 視察団 or inspection groups to Korea.

In addition to those categories mentioned above, there were journalists, scholars and political commentators who travelled to Korea. There were also colonial immigrants who kept diaries and wrote accounts of their adventures in the new imperial frontierland, as well as missionaries of various faiths, among others.⁸

My intention to focus on travel writing as a textualized field of colonial discourse presupposes as a starting point recent achievements in historical studies of Japanese imperialism and its intellectual foundation by Stefan Tanaka and Peter Duus respectively. Tanaka shows how the emergence of the discursive field of *Shina* 支那—China—among late nineteenth-century Japanese academics, went hand-in-hand with the authorization of such a

⁷ Shimonoseki Sen–Man Annaijo, ed., *Sen–Man shisatsudan kinenshi: Sen–Man jūnichi* [Twelve days in Korea and Manchuria: in memory of the Korea–Manchuria inspection tour] (Shimonoseki: Shimonoseki Sen–Man Annaijo, 1929).

⁸ See, for example, Karasuga Ramon, *Chōsen e iku hito ni* [For those going to Korea] (Tokyo: Chōsen e Iku Hito ni Hensanjo, 1915), and Watase Tsunekichi, *Hantō dōbō no tame ni* [For our compatriots in the peninsula] (Tokyo: Sakakibara Bunseidō, 1917). In the wake of the annexation of Korea in 1910, speculatively-motivated people rushed to the peninsula, which was called *tokannetsu* 渡韓熱, fever to travel to Korea. For example, a Japanese-run newspaper company in Korea published a manual giving budget estimations and examples of successful settlement with 100 yen (Chōsen Nichinichi Shinbunsha, eds, *Tokan seikōbō* [Guide to a successful move to Korea] (Seoul: Chōsen Nichinichi Shinbunsha, 1910). In principle, since I am dealing with travelers, migrants and settlers are excluded from my article, although this distinction is made here merely to provide a working definition.

⁹ Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: rendering pasts into history* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993), p.267.

¹⁰ Peter Duus, *The abacus and the sword: the Japanese penetration of Korea, 1895–1910* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992), p.399.

¹¹ Tanaka, *Japan's Orient*, p.266.

¹² Duus, *The abacus and the sword*, p.423.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.433.

look again at
Tanaka re: Ereaty, a part in 2

cluster of discourses as constituting the “truth” about China. *Shina* was placed at the core of the notion of the Orient, *Tōyō* 東洋. The indigenous discourse on *Shina* and *Tōyō* was, according to Tanaka’s study, the product of careful scrutiny, accelerated by the shocking discovery that “Japan was among the ignored entities of history [by the West], those who were relegated to the past—the Orient.”⁹ In other words, Japan’s effort to come to terms with *Shina* and *Tōyō* was an attempt to make her own Orient out of the Orient, or to place herself outside the Orient by “Orientalizing” Asia. In order to understand this, we need to differentiate Said’s Orientalism—the cultural power exercised by the West over the East—from Japan’s orientalising of China, which cannot be explained by the conventional discourse of the western cultural domination of the non-west, for Chinese culture (if not China as a political empire) overtly dominated Japan for a very substantial historical period.

Where is Korea placed in all this? In his study of the Japanese “penetration of Korea” during the years 1895 to 1910, Peter Duus reveals the process by which images of Korea were solidified. Using the accounts of travellers who went to Korea a little before the official annexation of 1910, Duus delivers a vivid description of the way Koreans were strongly associated with “filth, squalor, and indolence.”¹⁰ Travel accounts and guidebooks were full of portrayals of Korean backwardness and primitiveness, which were regarded as something that could be overcome only by the intervention of Japan.

There is a parallel between the emergence of *Shina* and *Tōyō* as the object of “Orientalization” as depicted by Tanaka, on the one hand, and the rendering of Korea as powerless, timeless, primitive and childish—themes that are also cited in association with Orientalism—shown by Duus, on the other. In their treatment of how Japan faced the West, the two authors come close to one another. Attempting to trace the Japanese effort to historicize knowledge about China, Tanaka states that unlike Western nations that deal primarily with their own past, non-Western nation-states must confront two “pasts”—their own and that of the West which has relegated the non-Western past to antiquity.¹¹ Such a confrontation was closely accompanied by the acceptance of Western technology and epistemology as a model. This is what Duus depicts as “mimesis.” According to him, “what ultimately enabled the Japanese to mimic Western imperialism was their simultaneous mimesis of other aspects of Western ‘wealth and power.’”¹² However, Duus also emphasizes that the route and method taken by the Japanese differed from those taken by Western imperialisms: because of the ethnic and cultural commonality shared by Japanese and Koreans, the “yellow man’s burden” was not quite the same as the “white man’s burden” and the “imagined commonality ... may have encouraged the Japanese to offer opportunities to the Koreans within the colonial structure that were not available to other colonial peoples.”¹³ Thus, if Tanaka adheres to the “West versus non-West” vision and shows how the internal split of “non-West” into Japan and its Orient occurred, Duus visualizes the Japanese mimicking the West—but not quite achieving this due

**Figure 2**

Songdo Beach, Pusan (Sajinūro Ponūn Kūndae Hanguk, vol. 1, p.207)

to her own “backwardness”¹⁴ and the “commonality” she shared with the peoples of her colony.

As pointed out by Duus and implied by Tanaka’s study of Japan’s approach to her Westernization and her “Orientalization” of China, mimesis seems to emerge in an important connection with regard to the culture of colonialism. The mimetic mechanism can work between the colonizer and the colonized with or without a conscious intention to take after one another, as is powerfully demonstrated in Taussig’s work on relations between rubber plantationists in Columbia and the Putamayo Indians. Taussig interprets the brutal treatment of Indians by plantation managers, often involving the killing of them for sport, as “the mimesis between the savagery attributed to the Indians by the colonists and the savagery perpetrated by the colonists.”¹⁵ Colonial mimesis between Japanese and Koreans was widely projected in official, academic and popular discourses on the basis of the shared historical roots of Koreans and Japanese. Duus points out that with the application of diligence, Japanese commentators believed that Koreans could become *like* Japanese, or indeed, become *Japanese*¹⁶ under the auspices of the assimilation policy which underpinned the colonial rule.¹⁷

The assimilation of Koreans and Japanese was often associated with the conspiratorial notion of *kōminka* 皇民化—the turning of Koreans into the Emperor’s subjects, or *naisen ittai* 内鮮一体—the uniting of Korea and Japan into one body.¹⁸ The assimilation understood in connection to *kōmin-*

¹⁴ Ibid., Conclusion.

¹⁵ Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, colonialism, and the wild man: a study in terror and healing* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.134.

¹⁶ Duus, *Abacus and sword*, pp.431–2.

¹⁷ Michael Weiner, *The Korean community in interwar Japan: the limits of assimilation* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁸ See, for example, Miyata Setsuko, *Chōsen minshū to “kōminka” seisaku* [Korean people and the policy to “turn them into the Emperor’s subjects”] (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1985).

¹⁹ See, for example, Miyata Setsuko, Kim Yöng-dal and Yang T'ae-ho, *Sōshi kaimei* [The reform of names] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1992).

²⁰ Travel writing has attracted much attention in recent literary and feminist studies. See, for example, Sara Mills, *Discourse of difference: an analysis of women's travel writing and colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991).

²¹ Needless to say, many Koreans travelled to Japan although in entirely different contexts, including forced labour mobilization and the military recruitment of both men for the army and navy and women as army prostitutes.

²² Itō Sadagorō, *Saikin no Chōsen oyobi Shina* [Recent news on Korea and China] (Kobe: Kōbe Shikai Shina Shisatsudan, 1921), p.15.

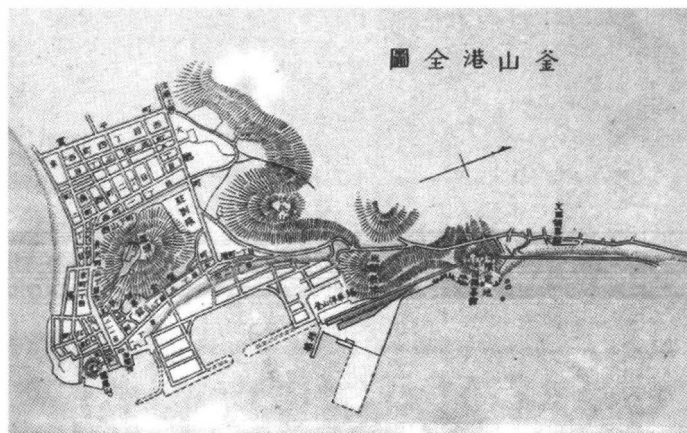
²³ Ōmachi Kagetsu, *Man-Sen yūki* [Travel diary of Manchuria and Korea] (Tokyo: Ōsakayagō Shoten, 1919), p.106.

²⁴ Ishikura Sōkichi, *Shintenchi o iku* [Traveling the new frontier] (Yonezawa: Yonezawa Shinbunsha, 1933), p.17.

²⁵ Katō Hekigotō, "Chōsen no aki kakete," in *Shin Nihon kenbutsu* [New Japan sightseeing], ed. Kanō Tanejirō (Tokyo: Kanō Bun'endō, 1918), pp. 111, 115.

Figure 3

Map of the port of Pusan in the 1910s (Sajinūro Ponūn Kūndae Hanguk, vol.1, p.194)



ka was necessarily oppressive, in that it attempted to exterminate the ethnic and national identity of Koreans—if such an identity was pre-given—and hence, unjust. The same went for *sōshi kaimei* 創氏改名, the policy to “reform” or change Korean names into Japanese, proclaimed in 1940. Although more sophisticated studies have recently become available,¹⁹ the assumed premise is that this was a wholesale attempt on the part of Japanese imperialism to turn Koreans into Japanese—and hence unjust. The texts dealt with in this article suggest that these moral judgements and essentialized notions of Koreanness and Japaneseness may be suspended and that assimilation be reconsidered as a mimetic interaction, while it is fully acknowledged that assimilation did indeed take real effect in the process of colonization.

We shall find that there was a peculiarity in the Japanese colonial discourse embodied in travel writing, in that many travellers held the view, amongst other very diverse understandings of the colony, that Korea was similar to Japan. Kinship metaphors were frequently used for Koreans, and an emphasis on not regarding Korea as a conquered foreign land was widespread. Rather, Japanese travellers “discovered Japan” in Korea. They did not necessarily write about Korea in friendly terms and some travellers were scornful about “Korean ways” of living, but in general the fascination or somewhat thrilling excitement of meeting the totally unknown is absent in these accounts. There was an anticipation of encountering a replica of Japan, and the travellers were mildly surprised when they had to record differences between the two.

In writing about Korea, it is true, the Japanese travellers were rendering the place intelligible to Japanese readers, or rather, were making imagining about Korea possible.²⁰ But, at the same time their travel, more than discovering Korea or Koreans, was about discovering themselves; concerns about their own moral standards and their qualification to be a colonizer caused them discomfort and bother and haunted them during their sojourns in Korea, as we shall see.²¹

Discover Japan in Korea

Fuzan [Pusan] is so like Kobe . . . Just as Kobe is the front-door for Japan, so is Fuzan for Korea. Both ports prosper on account of trade. Geographically, both cities have mountains behind and the sea in front . . .²²

Thus wrote Itō Sadagorō 伊藤貞五郎, who was accompanying the Kobe City Government Inspection Team in 1921, upon his arrival at Pusan, Korea’s southern port. Although already in the colony, his first attempt was to identify Korea with Japan, rather than allow himself to

be fascinated with the exoticism of Korea.

Exercises in the spatial and geographical identification of Korea with Japan abound and Korean places are given Japanese twins: Kyoto with Pyöngyang,²³ Kyöngju with Nara,²⁴ etc. Certain mountains remind the author of the Japan Alps,²⁵ while the wasteland north of Seoul was reminiscent of the highlands of Kitamizakai in Hokkaido.²⁶ One typical routinely-cited attraction was *Omaki no chaya* お牧の茶屋, Omaki's Café, in Pyöngyang, named after the Japanese manageress. Many writers, including novelists and journalists and even an official tour guidebook refer to this café which served Japanese teas, while local delicacies and tea-houses in the colony run by Koreans receive no mention.²⁷

More frequent self-referencing occurs in a historical context. The authors reconstruct in minute detail the events connected with Toyotomo Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea in the late sixteenth century, or the Sino-Japanese War of the late nineteenth century which was mainly fought on Korean soil.²⁸

For example, Numanami Takeo 沼波武夫, a poet whose travel to Korea was sponsored by the Ministry of Education with an assignment to compose

Figure 4

The steamship Koryö, the first to sail the Pusan-Sbimonoseki route opened in 1912, here tied up at the First Pier, Pusan port, used for passenger liners (Sajinüro Ponün Kündae Hanguk, vol.1, p.196)

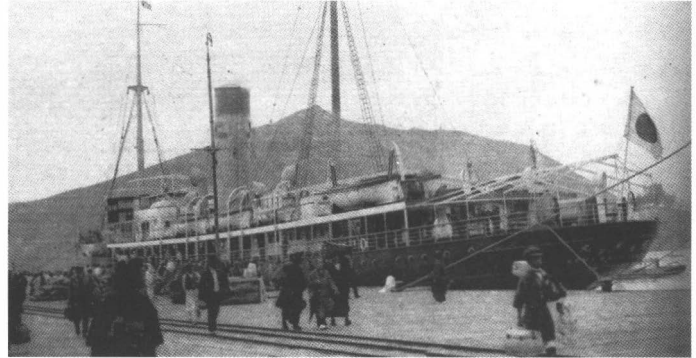


Figure 5

Ülmildae overlooking the city of Pyöngyang, scene of a fierce battle during Hideyoshi's 1592 expedition against Korea (Sajinüro Ponün Kündae Hanguk, vol.2, p.39)





Figure 6

Onyang hot springs (Sajinŭro Ponŭn Kŭndae Hanguk, vol.1, p.127)

²⁶ Shimamura Hōgetsu, “Shin Nihon kenbutsu” [New Japan sightseeing], in *ibid.*, p.11.

²⁷ See Takahama Kyoshi, *Chōsen* [Korea] (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1919); Ishikura, *Sbintenchi o iku*; and Chōsen Sōtokufu Tetsudōkyoku, eds, *Chōsen ryokō annaiki* [Korean tour guide] (Seoul: Chōsen Sōtokufu Tetsudōkyoku, 1934), p.87.

²⁸ See Ōmachi, *Man-Sen yūki*, for example.

²⁹ Numanami Takeo, *Sen-Man hūbutsuki* [A diary of Korean and Manchurian] (Ōsakayagō Shoten, 1920), p.76.

poems for children’s school songs with Korea-related themes, wrote upon his visit to Chinju about Hideyoshi. Numanami gives us a detailed account of what happened (or what he thinks happened) during the two-week battle in 1592, including the names of protagonists and their kinship relations, the location of specific battles, distances between forts, action taken, strategic concerns, and statistical data. He then dedicates a poem to Ronkai [Nongae in Korean], a *kisaeng*, or female entertainer, who seized a Japanese General by the neck and plunged with him into the River Nam, drowning him, but also killing herself at the same time.

In front of me flows the River Nam
Into which Ronkai plunged with a Japanese General.

Ronkai, can you see my tears
Welling up in my eyes?

I, a Japanese man, just like that General,
Am thinking about you fondly.²⁹

Numanami is nostalgic about Korea’s past, a past only newly acquired by the Japanese through colonial annexation. The reader of Numanami’s history or story attached to Chinju gains the impression that Chinju—and indeed Korea as a whole—had always been part of Japan and was significant in her history, and as such, it is implied that Korea was a place to which Japanese metropolitan readers should be emotionally attached.

Some found Korea to be in certain ways more authentically “Japanese” than contemporary Japan. Tayama Kahō 田山花袋 wrote that, whereas in Japan the lifestyle had significantly changed since the Kamakura period of the

twelfth century, in Korea it had not changed and “everything is exactly the same as the old days” of Japan, including clothes, housing, roads and transport. Tayama continues: “that is why one feels at home here in Korea. If one wants to understand the aesthetics of the Fujiwara or Heian period, one must see Korea.”³⁰ Shimamura Hōgetsu 島村抱月 wrote that what the Japanese find in Korea’s beautiful landscape are “ancient-looking Korean houses and peasants who resemble mandarins of the ancient Japanese court, now so poor that they are obliged to work as cattle-keepers, garbed in worn-out official attire”³¹ What these authors were doing makes sense in terms of the logic of assimilation: Korea, which had been associated with an image of inferiority prior to annexation, as shown in Duus’s study mentioned above, was now formally part of the empire and as such, had to be shown to have a continuity with Japan’s past. Hence the evolutionary scheme of “discovering” in Korea the Japan of olden days, Korea sharing the same roots as Japan, if only slower in development.

³⁰ Tayama Kahō, *Man-Sen no kōraku* [The pleasure of traveling in Manchuria and Korea] (Tokyo: Ōsakayagō Shoten, 1924), p.343.

³¹ Shimamura, “ShinNihon kenbutsu,” p.12.

Figure 7

Market day, Chōnju (Sajinūro Ponñun Kündae Hanguk, vol.1, p.145)



³² Hayasaka Yoshio, *Warera no Man-Sen* [Our Manchuria, our Korea] (Sapporo: Hokkōsha, 1934), pp.61–5.

The Inspecting Eye

As stated at the beginning of this article, not only teachers but also local council officials paid inspection visits to schools in Korea. Travellers who were neither teachers nor bureaucrats also commented, often extensively, on the school system in the colony and left records of encounters with students and pupils. What is interesting in the inspection travel writings is that the authors are almost unanimously biased in favour of youth: younger Koreans were welcomed as new members of the Empire, while older Koreans who persisted with their traditional lifestyle were disliked as they personified the pre-colonial country. One lone traveller, a teacher in a women's high school in Sapporo, remarked:

*half
frankly* →

I never liked Koreans, but nor do I dislike all Koreans. I felt very close to certain individuals ...

At about three o'clock in the morning when I was half-dreaming, two young Korean women entered the carriage [the author is riding the overnight train from Kaesŏng to the north] ... Both were very pretty: one had an oval face with a well-shaped nose, the other had a round face with big eyes and a very light complexion ... I gathered they were students ... They were ever so graceful ...

[Upon my questioning them] One of them answered, smiling shyly, "We are going to Pyŏngyang." Her [Japanese] pronunciation was so clear that it would beat women students in Tokyo ...

"Are your Japanese teachers kind to you?" I asked.

"Yes, they are all so kind."

... What sweet figures, when they said good-bye to me ... I wished all happiness to those dear creatures.³²

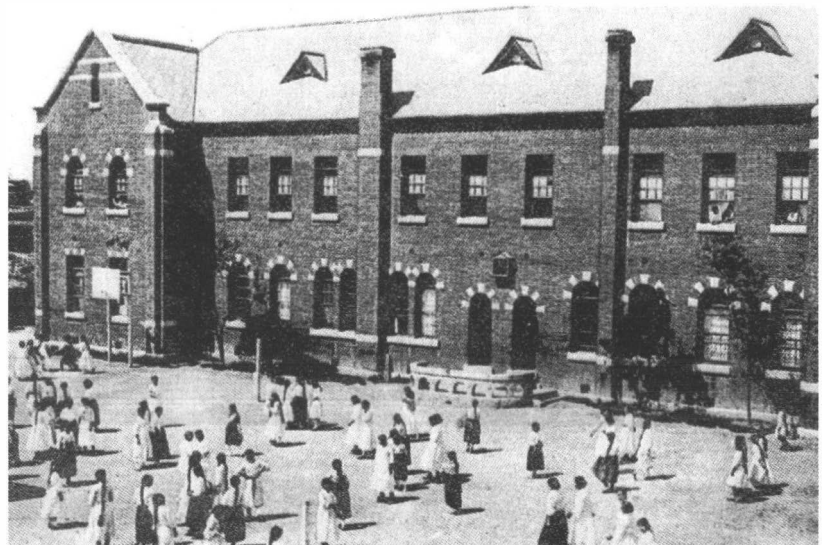


Figure 8

Sukmyŏng Girls' High School, Seoul (Sajinŭro Ponŭn Kŭndae Hanguk, vol.1, p.145)

**Figure 9**

Elementary school for Korean children, Kaechŏn (—Japanese children attended separate schools) (Sajinŭro Ponŭn Kŭndae Hanguk, vol.1, p.168)

Another expression of praise for youth and children came from a well-connected traveller who frequented the Governor-General's office in Seoul and freely visited official institutions such as prisons and schools:

How to educate natives in the colony is the most difficult question in the world The school I visited is located in the heart of a Korean hamlet All the children from first year to fourth year listen to the teacher very carefully. They look lovely As far as I have so far seen in Korea I have come across very few children with a vulgar, servile look, unlike in Japan where we see it so often. On the whole, boys are good-looking with a very intelligent expression. Even among the poor, children behave gracefully and look very thoughtful. What a difference there is between children and adults! ...

[In class] boys are remarkably articulate and flawless in the way they speak and how they pronounce [Japanese]. Their words and sentences are clear, their stories logical and their attitude calm and well-composed. This is far superior to Japanese children.³³

Similar plaudits for classroom performance were given by other authors. Komatsu Mitsuo 小松光雄, for example, who recorded the trip to Korea by a delegation from the Hyogo prefectural government, tells of a (for him) moving scene in a Seoul primary school where "pupils sang our national anthem beautifully and expressed thanks for the benevolence of our Emperor. This moved the members of our delegation to tears."³⁴

Concepts of race and civilization are closely connected to a pedagogical approach to Korea. For example, Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰, who frequently visited Korea, wrote time

³³ Hara Shōichirō, *Cbōsen no tabi* [Travels in Korea] (Tokyo: Gonshōdō Shoten, 1917), pp.80 ff.

³⁴ Komatsu Mitsuo, *Rozandō manki* [The idle diary of Rozandō] (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shoten, 1922), p.28.

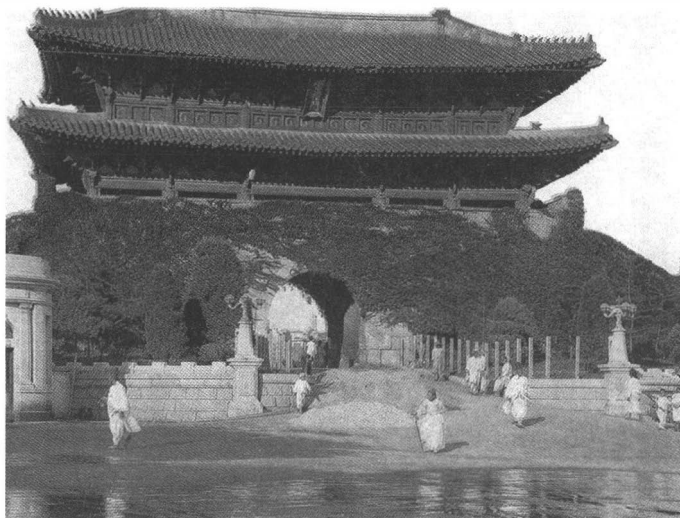
Figure 10

Japanese Shinto shrine in P'yŏngyang (Sajin-ŭ-ro Ponŭn Kŭndae Hanguk, vol.2, p.47)



Figure 11

Namdaemun, one of the four outer city gates of Seoul, 1920s
(Sajinūro Pontūn Kūndae Hanguk, vol. 1, p. 14)



³⁵ Tokutomi Sohō, *Ryōkyōkyoryūshi* [Sojourn diaries of the two capitals] (Tokyo: Minyūsha, 1915), p. 231.

³⁶ For example, Kanazawa Shōzaburō “theorized” on the similarity of Korea and Japan and attempted to prove their identical historical roots using linguistic and other data (Kanazawa Shōzaburō, *Nissen Dōsorōn* [The theory of identity of Korea and Japan] (Tokyo: Han Tōyōsha, 1929).

³⁷ Nakano Seigō, *Waga mitaru Man-Sen* [Korea and Manchuria as I saw them] (Tokyo: Seikyōsha, 1915), pp. 99–100.

³⁸ Kameoka Eikichi, *Chōsen ochokusbi shite* [Looking straight at Korea] (Seoul: Chōsen Oyobi Chōsenjinsha, 1924), pp. 98–100.

³⁹ Matsumura Shōsei, *Akeyuku Chōsen* [Korea in the dawn] (Seoul: Teikoku Chihō Gyōsei Gakkai, 1925), p. 11.

⁴⁰ Shimomura Kainan, *Ochiboshū* [Collection of fallen leaves] (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1929), p. 179.

and again that Korea was a civilized nation and that it would be “a laughable act of ignorance” if one were to talk about the Japanese government of Korea in the same terms as the colonial rule of Africa by European nations.³⁵ Since Koreans, who supposedly shared the same origins as the Japanese,³⁶ were forced into a backward lifestyle due to the corrupt dynastic government of recent centuries, it was merely a matter of “teaching them properly” in order to rescue them from backwardness. In other words, they, too, could be led by benevolent Japanese Imperial rule to see the light of civilization. Such was the logic expounded in metropolitan and colonial official discourse and then reproduced and reinforced in travel literature. Some tried to argue how different it was for Japan to “Japanize” Korea and Europeans to “civilize” their colonized peoples, as we find in Nakano Seigō 中野正剛:

If the white races have their own native policies, we, a coloured race, also have our own. However, among us Japanese, there are people who are at times too servile toward whites . . . There are among our compatriots some who look down on their same coloured race. Black and darker races are remote from us, and therefore we do not have to concern ourselves with them directly; but towards people who are close to us, that is, Koreans and Chinese, some Japanese show disdain, which is sheer stupidity. I wish to emphasize that our compatriots must be awoken [to an enlightened attitude toward Chinese and Koreans] for the sake of our Imperial prosperity.³⁷

Travel-writers often assumed the attitude of the teacher—“inspecting” the colony—and tried to confirm the evolutionary capacity of Koreans to learn to be “civilized”—that is, “Japanized.” Hence their predilection for youth and schoolchildren who could pronounce Japanese beautifully and showed their gratitude to the Japanese Emperor. In assuming a pedagogical position, travellers often used kinship terminology. Koreans were referred to as “younger brothers” who should be taught and guided with sympathy and kindness,³⁸ as a “wife” to Japan who could not be separated from her husband and who must be made to love him,³⁹ or as a “step-children,” especially when they did not behave and caused trouble by, for example, complaining about the annexation by Japan.⁴⁰

Tours of inspection were not just a one-way process of learning about how Koreans were progressing in becoming new Imperial (sub-)subjects. They were educational for the travellers themselves as well. Thus, Hotsumi Shigetō 穂積重遠, a Professor of Law at Tokyo Imperial University, wrote ruefully about his visit to a leprosy hospital in Korea where he had to ask a certain Dr. Wilson to translate his Japanese into Korean when trying to speak with patients:

I realized that I could not communicate with them, although we are all Japanese [the Korean patients being now Japanese subjects]. I had to ask Dr. Wilson, who was fluent in Korean and who shared his life with these patients [to interpret for me]. Standing side by side with him in front of 600 patients, I was deeply moved, but at the same time felt terribly ashamed.⁴¹

⁴¹ Hotsumi Shigetō, *Chōsen yūki* [Travel diary of Korea] (Tokyo: Shakai Kyōiku Kyōkai, 1934), p.25.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁴³ Shimomura, *Ochibosbū*, pp.163–4.

Hotsumi emphasized the necessity of Japanese learning Korean in order to communicate with their new fellow nationals.⁴² This need was frequently noted by Japanese travellers who were inconvenienced by being unable to understand what was going on in the colony. Some adopted a self-critical position, such as Hotsumi, though others were less tolerant, like Shimomura Kainan 下村海南 who complained about the “political correctness” of the Japanese press in banning the derogatory word *Senjin* 鮮人 for “Koreans” and the Japanese ignorance of Korean that enabled Koreans to get away with labeling Japanese with derogatory terms—such as “pigs” or “wooden shoes”—in their own vernacular.⁴³ The ability of Koreans to speak Japanese, an ability which had not been envisaged before the travellers left their own shores, was viewed with fresh surprise: “why do they speak our language, while we do not speak theirs?” The need to learn Korean, a foreign language, was commented on as if such a difference had never been anticipated between these brother nationals.

Figure 12

Kwanghwamun, Kyōngbok Palace, just before its demolition by the colonial Government-General in 1925 (Sajinūro Ponūn Kūndae Hanguk, vol.1, p.36)



⁴⁴ Hashimoto Fumihisa, *Tōa no tabi* [Travel in East Asia] (Sendai: Tōhoku Insatsu, 1923), p.17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁴⁶ Tomoda Yoshitake, *Shina, Manshū, Chōsen ryokō: tobu tori monogatari* [Travels in China, Manchuria and Korea: the story of flyingbirds] (Tokyo: Sanseisha, 1930), p.420.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.445.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.421.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.437.

This kind of self-doubt led writers to reflect on whether Japanese were capable of ruling Korea and to question their quality as a “master nation.” Such reflections went hand-in-hand with concern over *how* to teach Koreans: they should not be taught “wrongly.” This can be seen in the following comment by Hashimoto Fumihisa 橋本文寿, a teacher:

As a result of this trip to Korea I have learnt two things. In the first instance, I found that education in Korea is being successfully carried out. Secondly, however, education here may unexpectedly have an unsuccessful outcome . . . I was amazed by the fluency of the pupils’ Japanese in a primary school in Seoul. A couple of years at primary level are sufficient for Koreans to acquire fluent-enough Japanese for schooling . . . One may naturally, therefore, conclude that education in the colony is successful. But, if one thinks about it more carefully, there is a contradictory notion here. Koreans have recently started to realize the importance of education. Why?—because of the Independence Movement of March 1919.⁴⁴

The author went on to warn the Governor-General’s office of the possibility of “teaching Koreans too well” and its potential danger to colonial rule. In order to prevent this, the author suggests, the metropolitan government should send more Japanese with superior personal qualities and qualifications, rather than allowing, as was currently the case, only poor peasants to emigrate from Japan to Korea.⁴⁵

Similarly, Tomoda Yoshitake 友田宣剛, a retired professor in the Japanese Military Academy, wrote after his trip to Korea that “*Senjin* [derogatory for Koreans] are not bad at all,” having found that six out of seven graduates of the Philosophy Department of Seoul University were Koreans,⁴⁶ and that “if we teach them very well, we can make them as good as Japanese,”⁴⁷ but “we have to be careful with one thing: if we educate them too well, they may dream up bad things such as calling for insurrections [against Japanese].”⁴⁸ According to Tomoda’s account of his interview with the Governor-

General, the latter remarked that, “Koreans are like little worms, not at all rebellious,” and yet, those who studied in Japan, upon their return home, would spread bad seeds and awaken the “worm-like simplistic *Senjin* to dangerous causes.”⁴⁹ The possible overeducation of Koreans, in the opinion of the travellers, should be met by the even better education of the Japanese themselves. In other words, the cultural and intellectual hierarchy should be preserved. It was in this connection that traveller-writers seriously questioned the ability of the Japanese to be a ruling nation, positioned a rank above the Koreans. For example, many witnessed

Figure 13

Japanese shopping area, Myōngdong, Seoul (Sajinūro Ponūn Kūndae Hanguk, vol.1, p.21)



the cruel and exploitative attitude of Japanese in the colony towards Koreans characterized by frequent violence and deliberate harassment, and metropolitan Japanese found it to be an embarrassment and a disgrace.⁵⁰

A travel novel by Okino Iwasaburō 沖野岩三郎 deserves some attention here. Published in 1923, it contains extensive descriptions of overbearing Japanese behaviour in Korea. Taking the form of a dialogue between Otonashi, a Japanese tourist in Korea, and Ōhashi, a Japanese expatriate there, the novel paints a picture of Korean culture being denigrated and Koreans treated as cattle or slaves in every locality where there was a concentration of Japanese.⁵¹ It is interesting to note the pedagogical care taken throughout this novel, which would appear to have been written with the intention of warning the Japanese about their behaviour. In the following example Ōhashi describes Japanese high-handedness to Otonashi:

When you go to the Korean countryside, you will see people called *pobari* who are poor coolies ... Japanese usually abuse them. When Japanese small shopkeepers or brothel-owners travel through Korean villages, they cast threatening looks about whenever they come across groups of Koreans. This is frightening enough to make the poor Koreans say defensive things like: "Can you see, sir, that I have my hair cropped short like you Japanese?" while showing their head shorn of the traditional top-knot. [Recognizing their anxiety] the Japanese then take advantage of these poor creatures, making them into their private *pobari* and having them carry their luggage for miles without any payment.⁵²

Another passage is overtly educational:

In the restaurant ... a *kisaeng* entertainer [Korean woman] called the [Korean] waiter *yōbo*. This sparked off discussion. "*Yōbo* ... is an abbreviation of *Yōgi bo*, which means "hello, are you there?" When Japanese say *yōbo*, however, they pronounce it placing the stress on *bo*. This sounds like an angry shout to Koreans. *Yōbosbio* would be more polite than *yōbo*, but Japanese would never use it to Koreans."

... Whenever Japanese address [Koreans] with the word *yōbo*, their tone is contemptuous ... They try to display a pathetic patriotism in these trivial matters. I say we will lose a lot if we cling on to this kind of rudeness and thoughtlessness ...⁵³

There were more politically direct criticisms of this sort. For example, Kameoka Eikichi 亀岡栄吉, who lived in Korea, wrote that "if we, the people of the motherland, do not educate ourselves [about our overbearing attitude toward Koreans], we will strangle ourselves in due course."⁵⁴ Travellers, on the other hand, often formed critical opinions about the Government-General, and their experiences in the colony culminated in various charges against it. Some scornfully dismissed the Government-General as monopolistic in its colonial government without being open to co-operation with metropolitan Japanese,⁵⁵ while others felt antagonistic towards the colonial government which in their eyes had failed to benefit Koreans through the annexation and was hence increasing social instability in the colony by

⁵⁰ Komatsu, *Rozandō manki*, p.21.

⁵¹ It is interesting to note that in other travel writings, Koreans do not generally appear as protagonists, but in travel novels Korean characters are developed and not necessarily always in a derogatory manner (as in Takahama, *Chōsen*).

⁵² Okino Iwasaburō, *Hakubyō o fumite* [Treading on thin ice] (Tokyo: Ōsakayagō Shoten, 1923), pp.51ff.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.231–3.

⁵⁴ Kameoka, *Chōsen o chokushi shite*, p.88.

⁵⁵ Inoue Tadao, *Kotō no kage* [In the shade of the ancient tower] (Takaoka: Kōkakai, 1926), p.17.



Figure 14

Sōngyori Monument in Pyōngyang, erected by the Japanese to commemorate their victory in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–95 (Sajinūro Ponūn Kūndae Hānguk, vol.2, p.47)

⁵⁶ Murata Koimaro, *Chōsen no seikatsu to bunka* [Korean life and culture] (Tokyo: Mejiro Shoten, 1924), pp.21–6.

⁵⁷ Nakano Seigō, *Waga mitaru Man-Sen*, pp.114, 143–50.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.122–8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.232, 264.

effectively encouraging Koreans to rise up and recover their national independence.⁵⁶ For example, Nakano Seigo in his travel account denounced the Governor-General's office for consisting of a close circle of kinsmen and friends of the Governor-General himself and for its inhumane rule in the country and suggested, among other things, that part of the imperial Japanese household be moved to Korea and a constitutional monarchy formed separate from the mainland.⁵⁷

Witnessing the unjustifiable rudeness and brutality on the part

of Japanese in the colony towards Koreans, many travellers questioned the moral and practical capability of Japanese as colonial rulers. The aforementioned Nakano time and again questioned the *shōkuminteki nōryōku* 植民的能力, colonizing capacity, of the Japanese,⁵⁸ while Tokutomi Sohō, accusing the Japanese government in Korea of being as strict and vigilant as primary school teachers, wrote: “it shows that we lack the capacity and quality of rulers. It destroys our face; we should be embarrassed by this What makes ruling Korea difficult is not the Koreans themselves, but we Japanese and our inconsiderate, at times stupid, words and deeds.”⁵⁹ Japanese in the colony were, in the eyes of the metropolitan travellers, insecure rulers who readily resorted to violence rather than rational measures, and artless governors who communicated through oppression rather than enlightenment. In this way, the “inspecting eye” of the Japanese travellers in the colony was full of ambivalence; it was infested with self-suspicion and the uncomfortable admission that colonial rule was not as smooth as it was hoped it would be, and that the Japanese themselves were mainly to blame for this state of affairs.

The Threat of Mimicry

Although, as stated earlier, travellers were rather presumptuous about the assumed similarity between Korea and Japan, when exposed to the potential effects of mimetic relations between the two, they formed contrasting views. Some took the Korean “mimicking ability” as a threat to Japanese identity. Insisting on the qualitative improvement of Japanese residents in the colony, Nakano wrote: “If there are so few Japanese living in Korea today, I should say we would soon see the Koreanization of Japan, rather than the other way

around. In fact, many Japanese officials in Korea are Koreanized in their oppressive manners which resembles those of the old court government of Korea.⁶⁰ Whether the pre-colonial Korean court was oppressive or not is beside the point, but it is important to note that the statement echoes Taussig's mirroring mechanism of mimesis between the presupposed barbarity of the colonized and actual barbaric oppression (see above). Nakano is concerned about the Japanese "lack of a capacity to colonize and assimilate," in contrast to the mimicking capacity of Koreans.⁶¹ For him, assimilation was an "either-or" competition in mimicry between Koreans and Japanese—either "they become us" or "we become them."

Others were more secure about the mimicry between Korea and Japan. The aforementioned Tokutomi Sohō was of the opinion that if Koreans were to find Japanese customs superior to their own, they would "imitate" the Japanese without being forced to do so.⁶² From this position, he warned against implementing a facile and unhierarchical assimilation policy which in his eyes would give Koreans too much equality with Japanese, thereby making them just the same as Japanese, and in turn rendering colonial rule meaningless.⁶³ For Tokutomi, mimicry between Koreans and Japanese was after all based on unequal modeling, with Korea copying Japan, the master model.

Others also took the view that the Japanese should provide Koreans with the model to be mimicked. Hayasaka, a teacher from Sapporo, echoing his profession (see the previous section) and warning against the arrogance of the Japanese in Korea, wrote: "since we are teaching Koreans, they will learn

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.122.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.123.

⁶² Tokutomi, *Ryōkyō kyoryūshi*, pp.266-7.

⁶³ Ibid., pp.264-5.

Figure 15

View of the Secret Garden, Changdōk Palace, Seoul (Sajinūro Ponūn Kūndae Hanguk, vol.1, p.39)



⁶⁴ Hayasaka, *Warera no Man-Sen*, p.11.

⁶⁵ Karasuga, *Chōsen e iku bito ni*, p.19.

⁶⁶ Kameoka, *Chōsen o chokushi shite*, p.182.

⁶⁷ Katō, “Chōsen no aki kakete,” p.130.

from us to be arrogant towards others, in this case, to us Japanese.”⁶⁴ Travellers with a less pedagogical approach also commented, but with more ambiguity, on the possibility of mimesis between Koreans and Japanese. For example, Karasuga wrote after his long sojourn in Korea:

How I think Koreans differ distinctly from Japanese is that unlike us, they lack a spirit of sacrifice; they go all out to lick the shoes of those more powerful than themselves, while they severely abuse those who are weaker But think carefully. Are we Japanese genuinely sacrificing when it comes to helping each other? . . . Are we not in fact calculating rewards rather than being generous? . . . Koreans and Japanese are actually very similar; they behave like us, while we do the kind of things they do.⁶⁵

Mimesis between Japanese and Koreans confused travellers, and in their bewilderment they reiterated the question about the suitability of the Japanese to rule, often insisting that “before we demand that Koreans give up their attempt to recover independence, we must discipline the Japanese into being the master nation.”⁶⁶ Here, “master nation” may be read with the dual meaning of the master as ruler and as teacher. In their doubts about the capacity of Japan to be the ruler/teacher, travellers left with the uncomfortable prediction that “To treat Koreans as something less than human is actually corrupting us, reducing us into something less than Koreans themselves.”⁶⁷

Competing Discourses of Colonialism

⁶⁸ Hara, *Chōsen no tabi*, p.74.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Numanami, *Sen-Man būbutsuki*, p.24.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.128.

It is true that we find in some travellers’ writings the standard Orientalistic depiction of Korea. For example, many found that Korean women and especially *kisaeng* entertainers constituted the most interesting part of their trip. According to these travellers, the women’s costume was “exceptionally beautiful, perhaps the most beautiful in the whole world,”⁶⁸ while often at the same time the Japanese female dress was denigrated as “shapeless and vulgar.”⁶⁹ On visiting a Korean theatre, Numanami wrote: “the women’s seats are full of extremely good-looking ladies Koreans are on the whole a graceful people. Although they may not be as talented and crafty as the Japanese, as far as elegance goes, they are far superior to the mean-looking Japanese.”⁷⁰ Compared to these graceful Korean women, Numanami continued, “Japanese women are embarrassingly ugly.”⁷¹ Morimoto gave a twist to a pastoral dream when he wrote:

When we looked from Mt. Ryōtō down on the city of Seoul, we found that the houses got smaller the higher up the mountain they were. The upper flanks of the mountain were covered by the shanty dwellings of Koreans It was like looking at a diagram of human grades: Japanese houses representing superiority and Korean hovels inferiority We saw a man strolling about eating watermelon. Maybe he was the owner of that hovel—a tiny, little hovel Maybe we should not bother good-natured Koreans who live in a little hole and

are happy just eating watermelon Baggy clothes, little tiny house looking like a mushroom, small peace, modest happiness for small Koreans.⁷²

Travel guidebooks, though rarely, but just as Orientalists did, praised Seoul for its exoticness.⁷³

On the other hand, again in the Orientalist fashion, some despised and belittled Korea for its primitiveness and childishness. Ishikura wrote that Korea had “primitive soil not fit for cultivation,” while for him, Korean clothes were “primitive dress which manifests the conservatism of Koreans.”⁷⁴ Even the sight of Korean men smoking drew from Itō the remark: “white clothes and a long pipe—these seem to reveal a cultural backwardness and primitiveness.”⁷⁵ The teacher Hashimoto declared that “Korean peasants still lead the life of primitives who have just emerged from the stone age.”⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the views of travellers to the colony did not conform to the monolithic ambition of imperialism, officially expressed in state-level discourse and often taken for granted by historians of Japanese imperialism. Some travellers were sentimental toward the loss of Korea’s national independence to the Japanese. Thus, Karasuga wrote:

Koreans were poor and suffering people . . . , while Japanese were exercising their minds only on how to cheat them It is said that even when the nation is gone, the landscape remains. But, I wondered if this was true, since here in Korea, what elicited my pity was not just the people; the landscape itself was full of sorrow and misery.⁷⁷

Some stated that Korea was no colony but an extension of Japan proper. According to Komatsu, “it is wrong to take Korea as a mere colony in sub-

⁷² Morimoto Kazuo, *Sen-Man Shina tokoro-dokoro unen kagan nikki* [Fragmentary diary of various places in Korea, Manchuria and China] (Tokyo: Meguro Shoten, 1926), p.15.

⁷³ Azuma Fumio, *Tairiku shisatsu ryokō annai* [A guide to an inspection tour of the continent] (Tokyo: Seikōkan, 1940), p.13.

⁷⁴ Ishikura, *Shintenchi o iku*, pp.5, 9.

⁷⁵ Itō, *Saikin no Chōsen oyobi Shina*, p.22.

⁷⁶ Hashimoto, *Tōa no tabi*, p.9.

⁷⁷ Karasuga, *Chōsen e iku hito ni*, p.3.

Figure 16

Colonial modernity in Pyōngyang
(Sajinūro Ponūn Kūndae Hanguk,
vol.2, p.20)



⁷⁸ Komatsu, *Rozandō manki*, p.16.

⁷⁹ Nicholas Dirks, "Introduction: colonialism and culture," in *Colonialism and culture*, ed. N. Dirks (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p.7.

ordination to Japan, the master state. We should regard Korea as equivalent to Shikoku or Kyushu, in other words, a part of Japan."⁷⁸ Such a contention cannot simply be labeled as part of the assimilation policy or an ideological conspiracy to turn Koreans into Japanese. Travellers' accounts represented diverse points of articulation.

At least one thing is clear: colonialism is not simply the imposition of one "rule" over another; nor is it the application of one system, which is complete and consistent, over another. The "ruling system" itself may be impregnated with contradictory concepts and subject to transition and transformation more often than not caused by self-reflection and self-criticism. Colonialism, in other words, was not just economy-driven, not simply exploitative and not as systematic and totally sinister as it might appear in nationalistically-inspired postcolonial reconstructions of colonial history.

It is no doubt true that, given their position as a member of the colonizing nation, the act of writing about Korea on the part of the Japanese travellers manifests the power the Japanese Empire held over Korea the colony. How they wrote varied, however: the representation of natives; the terms used to demean or sympathize with Koreans; the logic of supporting or criticizing Japan's own colonial rule; the expressions of rapport with or contempt for Koreans met along the journey; these were heterogeneous, diverse, mutually contradictory and often not connected. Although the luxury of travel, the luxury of discovery, so to speak, belonged only to the colonizer, not to the colonized, we may admit (following Dirks) that knowledge about the colonized did not automatically lead to the colonizer's appropriation of it and that the historical process of such appropriation varied considerably according to which colonialism one is discussing.⁷⁹ It is true that we must not lose sight of a milieu where power worked very unequally between the colonized and the colonizing, the seen and the seeing, the visited and the visiting, and so on. But, it is equally true that this final verdict should not be used reductionistically. In other words, we must acknowledge that the field of colonial discourse was full of contesting ideologies, and as such, it was a highly unstable, uncertain and insecure terrain.

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