

The Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895): Japanese National Integration and Construction of the Korean “Other”

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Introduction

The significance of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) for the evolution of the international relations in East Asia in the twentieth century as well as the unfolding of national histories in China, Japan, and Korea has been long recognized. Within the confines of Korean history, too, Kim Key-hiuk, Lew Young-Ick, and others have emphasized the Sino-Japanese War¹ as a pivotal point in the decline of the Sino-centric tributary system (suzerainty) in East Asia and the rise of Japanese imperialism.² For sure, there remain unresolved questions regarding the “why’s” and “how’s” of the war. For instance, how the circumstances leading up to the assassination of Empress Myōngsōng/Queen Min were conditioned and configured by the war process is still not entirely clear.³ Likewise, the role played by the Tonghak peasant army (and its leaders such as Chōn Pongjun) in the complex palace intrigue involving the Taewōn’gun, Kojong, the Min family, and the Japanese representatives could be clarified further.⁴

Historiographically, among the English and Asian-language studies of the Sino-Japanese War, diplomatic relations, military strategies, and political intrigues have received a lion’s share of attention. In this essay, I

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would like to take a different route and focus on the cultural and social impact of the war on the construction of dual images: the changing Japanese self-image of themselves as a “citizen-subject” of an integrated nation, and the image of Koreans as the “Other” to be colonized and civilized. Along the way I will examine some of the more recent studies of the Sino-Japanese War that have adopted the approaches of social and cultural history as well as some of the contemporary (late nineteenth century) Japanese discourses on the war, expressed through various forms of civilian news media and popular culture. The goal is to situate these discursive activities in the proper context of the political, military and diplomatic relations surrounding the war, bridging the artificial gap created between these diverse approaches. I hope that this brief exercise will illuminate an important conjuncture in Japanese history, to which the processes of “national integration” and “imperial expansion” of Japan were converged, resulting in a new type of Asian nation-state that had accepted imperial wars as a critical component of its identity.⁵

The Meiji Imperialism

By early 1890s, Japan’s imperial state, under the leadership of the able ministers such as Itō Hirobumi (1840-1909) and Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922), had made tremendous progress toward re-designing and reforming its institutions, society, and even *mentalité* of the people, despite some rough patches along the way, including two serious internal crises resulting in the split in the government leadership (expulsion of Saigō Takamori and others following the “Expedition to Korea” controversy of 1873 and of former Finance Minister Ōkuma Shigenobu in 1881). Nonetheless, with the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution in 1889 and opening of the Diet in 1890, Japan had firmly established a centralized modern political system also open to popular participation. By early 1890s, the imperial state, having incorporated or successfully ameliorated the “threat” from the Popular Rights Movement, a series of

parliamentarian and protest movement coalescing around the establishment of the Diet and drafting of the constitution, was poised to tackle a number of issues that still prevented Japan from establishing itself as a fully independent nation-state, not to mention a Euro-American-style modern empire. The most critical among them were the unequal treaties and extraterritorial rights claimed by the Western powers, but also, more abstractly, a sense of nationalism that could cut through class, regional, and gender divisions. By then, too, a significant minority of Japanese was able to institutionally participate in policy-making through democratic politics. The newly enfranchised local notables were ready to work with the government for a variety of modernization projects instead of channeling their energies into political opposition, and the samurai-commoner divisions were becoming less significant, if not entirely eliminated. And yet, national integration was not fully realized in the eyes of many Meiji elite.⁶ As we can observe regarding the issue of military conscription below, many Japanese at the receiving end of the “modernization” policies of the Meiji state were not yet fully cognizant of themselves as “citizens/subjects” of the imperial nation-state. The ideological efforts designed to implement integration of the Japanese population under the Meiji emperor had only just begun, with the declaration of Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890 and imposition of it and the Emperor’s “true visage” on educational institutions.⁷

Japan had made incremental progress toward becoming a “Western-style” empire since the Restoration. Indeed, there was an instance of Japan’s “try-out” for colonization before the formal acquisition of Taiwan as the result of the victory in the Sino-Japanese War.⁸ In 1871, the killing by Taiwanese aborigines of fifty-four shipwrecked Ryūkyū fishermen provided an excuse for Japan to dispatch naval troops, under the leadership of Saigō Tsugumichi, brother of Saigō Takamori, in February 1874. Qing China refused to acknowledge the Japanese claim, as they preferred to see both Taiwanese aborigines and Ryūkyū people as members of tributary states. The potential Chinese response to the expedition was subject to a serious debate among the Japanese leaders,

who had to contemplate the possibility of a war with China, which was quite daunting for them at the time (and frankly only a little less so in 1894). During 1873's Expedition to Korea controversy, the "domestic reform first" faction led by Ōkubo Toshimichi had won the debate, claiming that a war with China could seriously derail socioeconomic reforms that Japan was undergoing.

The Chinese leader in charge of diplomacy, Li Hongzhang, also wanted to avoid military conflict. The two governments were able to agree upon the official Chinese recognition of the "legitimacy" of the Expedition and payment of half-million *taels* of gold as indemnity. In 1875, all Ryūkyū's diplomatic interactions, including tributary emissaries to and from China, were discontinued by Japanese. Qing reign names were dropped for Japanese imperial ones at the Ryūkyū court. The Ryūkyū king and young members of the court and administration were to visit Tokyo and presumably absorb its "modern" ways. The Ryūkyū monarchy pleaded with the Japanese government that it be allowed to keep the double-status of recognizing both Chinese and Japanese jurisdiction, but this was rejected. In 1879, Japan sent military and police force to suppress the court and established Okinawa Prefecture in place of the Ryūkyū Kingdom. Japan's behavior toward the kingdom served as a "practice run" for their subsequent colonization of Taiwan and Korea.

Korea between Japan and China

Compared to the Taiwan Expedition and "absorption" of the Ryūkyū kingdom into the body of the Japanese nation, Korea presented a number of larger problems for the Japanese empire. To a certain degree, the previous two cases presented challenges to the Sino-centric East Asian world order, but handling Korea required much more complex and refined approaches. In 1876, Japan practiced its own version of "gunboat diplomacy" on Korea, threatening the Korean court with military power so that the latter would open the nation for commercial relations with

foreign powers. The U.S. minister, John Armor Bingham, was supposed to have given Inoue Kaoru (1863-1915), then Vice-Minister of Legation to Korea and later Foreign Minister, a copy of Commodore Matthew Perry's memoir, who had come to Japan to practice his version of gunboat diplomacy, suggesting that Japan follow suit. At the conclusion of the treaty, Pusan and two more ports were opened to foreign trade, the Japanese settlement was established, and the Japanese minister was endowed with extraterritorial rights. The fine print of the treaty also made sure that Korea was stripped of the power to impose tariffs and Japanese currency guaranteed its utility on Korean soil. As was the case with Okinawa, Korean students were invited to study in Japan and learn "modern" knowledge and skills.

The Japanese government's main objectives at this juncture were 1) to secure its economic and political interests by "modernizing" the Korean government in order to allow for a more efficient economic penetration and pervasive political control without the appearance of unilateral domination, and 2) to deconstruct Qing China's tributary-suzerainty system by ensuring that Korea maintain its "independence" from China. This was a pattern already established in its demolition of the Ryūkyū Kingdom. Japanese leaders could not realize their economic and political dominance of East Asia without first breaking down the Sino-centric international order. They were also acutely aware of the larger context in which the respective empires (European and American) were competing and colluding with one another, practicing multilateral, informal imperialism in China. Japanese leaders were clearly interested in expanding their sphere of influence and could be conspiratorial and ruthless in pursuit of this goal: yet they were also prudent and anxious, and any inclination toward reckless adventurism was held in check by the fear of having to contend with the combined antagonisms of Western empires. As it turned out, one of the great changes the Sino-Japanese War occasioned was the modification of this pattern, as it effectively fulfilled Japan's goal of breaking down the Sino-centric tributary system. In the following "extraordinary" circumstances of the war, "adventurism"—

such as the blatant assassination of Empress Myōngsōng /Queen Min—on the part of the Japanese civilians and state officials became an accepted tool of foreign relations.

Meanwhile, how were civilian opinion-makers in Japan responding to the developments in Korea? Following the failed *coup d'état* in 1884 by Korean progressives, known as the Kapsin coup, we see that former Popular Rights activists as well as civilian opinion-makers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi agitated in the public sphere for the Japanese government to take initiative in “helping” Korea. The Liberal Party’s *Jiyū shinbun* and the *Jiji shinpō*, representing opinions of Fukuzawa and his coterie, shared the same attitude regarding this issue, despite their mutual antagonism in regard to domestic reform. The *Jiyū shinbun* had adopted an unmistakably jingoistic tone by the time the Kapsin coup was quelled: their editorials combined an idealistic Pan-Asianist vision with an aggressively arrogant view of Japan as the only civilized country in the East, taking Qing China to task for its “conservatism” and “refusal to change.” Cooperation with China may become desirable in the future, but only after they had abandoned their old ways.⁹ In an essay titled “Japanese Soldiers Must Demonstrate Their Power to the World,” the newspaper all but asked for a war with China or Korea, to properly display the sophistication of the Japanese navy or superlative quality of the Japanese army to the world powers. If negotiations with Qing China broke down, the Japanese government, in order to “test how sharp is the blade of our *nippondō*, should send the soldiers to fight them, demonstrate our power to the world, and astonish the arrogant white races.”¹⁰

With the Treaty of Tianjin signed in April 1885 in the aftermath of the failed coup, Japan and China agreed to withdraw troops, not to send military instructors, and to officially notify the other country when either of them took military action. The hawkish opinion-makers in Japan were right in the sense that China was able to reclaim their advantage over the Korean court, putting Japan in a retreat mode. It must be noted that Qing China since early 1880s was making a strong push for enforcing its own form of modern imperialism over Korea. High commissioners of the trade,

Chen Shutang and later Yuan Shikai (1859-1916), were doing more than simply reasserting the old tributary relationship with the Korean court. They actively sought to control telecommunication networks and to intervene in the way foreign trade was conducted by the Korean court and the way the latter borrowed money from abroad. Moreover, Li Hongzhang's leadership was being challenged domestically by the "Pure Party (Qingliu Dang)" in China, which called for more aggressive action in Korea.¹¹ This neo-imperialist maneuver by the Qing state meant that Japan would not be able to secure its dominant position in Korea possibly even if the former's suzerainty was effectively terminated.

Domestic Disputes and Foreign Policy Problems

Meanwhile, in Japan, an abrasive, antagonistic relationship between the opposition parties and the government had developed. Aside from domestic issues such as land tax reduction, the revision of unequal treaties with Western powers emerged as a favorite topic among the critics of the government. Even though the government had successfully co-opted the biggest opposition (and their old opponents during the Popular Rights Movement), the Liberal Party, the revision of unequal treaties was such an effective arsenal against the government that the relatively moderate Constitutional Progressive Party and the conservative National Society (Kokumin Kyōkai) were able to collaborate with one another in seizing it as the most effective weapon to knock the government. Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu (1844-1897), appointed on August 8, 1892, was aware that any foreign policy that directly went "against the public opinion" would result in "massive disputes and conflicts among the Japanese people both socially and spiritually," and ultimately in a national crisis of such scale that "our country shall not be able to maintain its security." He likened such an act to "giving a pill of insanity to the people."¹² Mutsu complained that the government's rigid adherence to "transcendentalism," the notion that the cabinet must conduct its administrative and foreign

affairs without being influenced by the factional politics of the Diet, was preventing it from entering into a productive conversation with the opposition parties.

In March 1894, Kim Ok-kyun was assassinated in Shanghai. Characterizing his death as a tragic fall of an honorable activist (Jp., *shishi*; Kr., *chisa*), Japanese newspapers used it to attack the passivity and incompetence of the government. The *Jiyū shinbun* alternately attacked Qing China for allegedly helping the Korean court carry out this heinous act of revenge and called for a stronger policy toward Korea by the Japanese government.¹³ In May 31, 1894, the House of Representatives voted 153 to 139 to ratify an impeachment memorial to the emperor. The memorial specifically cited the government's inability to contend with foreign powers as one of the reasons for impeachment. With the domestic situation as bleak for the state leaders as it was, the "internal reform" of Korea, advocated by Itō Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru (Foreign Minister from 1885 to 1887), had to take a back seat to having some "positive" results in the contestation against China. Mutsu, who was less interested in the modernization of the Korean court, was able to have his say in the cabinet meeting of June 15, 1894. The Japanese Minister in Korea Ōtori Keisuke worked closely with Mutsu, essentially abandoning the rhetoric of "Korean independence" and agreeing to use whatever means necessary to shut out the Chinese from the Korean court.¹⁴ At this critical juncture, Japanese leaders let the military organize its strategic headquarters into war mode as early as in June 5, 1894, implicitly committing to the possibility of a major conflict with China.

When Qing China was requested by the Korean court to send troops, ostensibly to suppress the farmer's rebellion initiated by the Tonghak ("Eastern Learning") church in 1894, Japan, citing the Treaty of Tianjin, also sent the troops. This was rightly perceived by Qing China as a major obstacle to its own imperialistic designs on Korea. A major boost to the Japanese side was the success of the negotiation for elimination of extraterritoriality with Great Britain in July 16, 1894. The success in substance was interpreted by Japanese state leaders that from that point on

the British could be relied upon to counterbalance at least potential Russian intervention. The British was of the opinion that Japan was the best candidate to reconstitute Korea for the benefit of the imperial powers. As Robert Hart, the Inspector General of Imperial Maritime Customs Service, put it, the Japanese were “ramming independence and reforms down the [Korean] king’s throat in a really masterful way,” and that Western powers were “against Japan’s methods but with her aims.”¹⁵ Even *The North-China Herald*, which continued to criticize Japan for “manufacturing” the war, conceded that:

...[There] can be little question that it would be much better for the Koreans if their country came under Japanese control. China does nothing to mitigate the intolerable misgovernment and oppression under which, as every traveller and writer tells us, the whole country groans and travails...¹⁶

Despite Japan’s citation of the Tianjin treaty as the rationale for the military intervention, the manner in which Japan entered the war shows that it was ultimately a unilateral assertion of their prerogatives. Japan began its intervention via military occupation of the Korean court on July 23, 1894 and a series of severe battles against the Tonghak army. By July 1894 the Tonghak revolt was quieting down. Some Japanese scholars consider this phase as the “Korea-Japan War,” half-acknowledged by the Japanese leaders, some of whom thought that the declaration of war should specify Korea as one of the enemy nations. The “warlike” mode Japan had entered as early as June 1894 partly explains, according to Fujimura, why Deputy Minister Sugimura Fukashi was able to claim that he merely followed through the Japanese official policy by instigating the assassination of Empress Myōngsōng/Queen Min.¹⁷ Finally negotiations broke down and Japan declared war on China in August 1, 1894. In the following months, the Japanese army and navy soundly defeated Qing forces, plunging Japan into an unprecedented maelstrom of war fever.

Perceptions and Discursive Constructions of the Sino-Japanese War

Let us now turn to the perceptions of the war among the Japanese reflected in the news media, popular culture, and the “real-life” accounts of the war. One of the more striking aspects of the conflict was how Japanese were seeing themselves as a representative force of “civilization” or “the modern” against the “backward” or “barbaric” Chinese/Koreans. This application of the “civilizational” discourse by the news media to an act of invasion had its precedents. It is clearly observable, for instance, in the woodblock depictions and news reports regarding the Taiwan expedition. The Japanese news media exaggerated the “savagery” of Taiwanese aborigines, making them into not only “headhunters” but also “cannibals” who allegedly “[lived] off the carcasses of their prisoners.” While the “official” records of the expedition emphasized the aspect of territorial conquest, the popular accounts ran away with the narrative of brave Japanese soldiers (who tend to be portrayed as samurai warriors at this point) fighting sub-human “foreigners” and, on the flip side of it, bringing them the gift of civilization.¹⁸

By the early 1880s and possibly by the late 1870s, Japan had a fully functioning “national public sphere” with its long history of germination and development since the late Tokugawa period and populated not only by literate elites but also politically motivated commoners and underclasses who could access a great deal of political discourse through lecture meetings, public readings of newspapers, graffiti, and other forms of dissemination. The notion of Japan as a successful case of Westernization and now equipped with the capacity to “enforce” the civilizing mission became widespread among Japanese of different political positions and social backgrounds. The characterization of Japan as a civilized nation conducting their affairs according to the rules of international relations can be discerned in the generally pro-government but moderate *Tokyo nichichi shinbun*’s editorials written just before the outbreak of the war. The newspaper argued in one 1890 editorial that

Qing China, bound to its outdated notion of suzerainty, did not understand public laws applying to all nations (*bankoku kōhō*): that to acknowledge Korea as an independent country was “following the public path of the world.”¹⁹ It further cautioned that, while peace may not be maintained when a nation’s glory was at stake, the Japanese military must remind itself that it was not in Korea to enslave Koreans, nor to add to their suffering by making wastelands out of their soils, nor to demand the Koreans behave in such a way to benefit only the Japanese. On the contrary, Japanese soldiers must demonstrate their true quality of “civilized restraint (*bunmei setsusei*),” in contradistinction to the Qing Chinese, motivated by the outdated ideas of Sino-centrism or the unabashed pursuit of profit and hegemony.²⁰

Unlike the *Tokyo nichichi*, the *Jiyū shinbun* not only went overboard with jingoistic rhetoric but also turned the “civilizational” discourse toward a more nationalistic direction that promoted “leveling of social differences.” The *Jiyū shinbun* editors proclaimed that “patriotism is indeed one of the emotions, yet this is also the greatest and most valuable emotion a human being can feel, for the rise and fall of a nation is solely dependent on it.” They acknowledged that to inculcate patriotism, it was completely acceptable for the Japanese government to start a war without any serious enemy in sight. They also pointed out that the Popular Rights Movement and other political activism geared toward the elimination of class differences made it possible for Japanese soldiers to fight for their country without fear of death. Compared to Japan, other Asian nations had let “their people live miserably like slaves or beasts of burden,” their politics were “utterly corrupt,” their officials were “arrogant,” and their people “cowardly and incapable of understanding what progress means” for several centuries.²¹ One can observe that *Jiyū shinbun*, a strong champion of “Popular Rights” and a popularly elected assembly, while indulging in the romanticism of the samurai heroics in its rhetoric, was fully expecting the Sino-Japanese War to integrate commoners, hitherto less interested in national affairs, into a nation-state. From this combination of romantic heroism and communal nationalism, however,

rose the deadly exclusivism that defined anyone who did not “belong” as “enemies” or who did not “agree” with the nationalist agenda as “traitors.” In its excess moments, *Jiyū shinbun* did indulge in the frightening rhetoric of exclusivism: anyone, as it claimed in a spectacularly aggressive editorial, who espoused disagreement with this “nationwide will for war (*kyokoku no senshi*)” should be considered “a traitor of the nation (*kuni no zoku*).”²²

Legitimizing the War: Inventing War Heroes

However, there was a form of “perception gap” between the discourses published in the newspapers and actual enthusiasm of the general population regarding Japan’s aggressive foreign policy, at least prior to the explosive proliferation of the news of Japanese victory in the P’yŏngyang and Yellow Sea battles.²³ Most “ordinary Japanese” were in fact not quite prepared for the possibility of fighting as a soldier in a foreign country. Japanese historians have proven that the rate of successful military service for the conscripted was pitifully low as late as in early twentieth century.²⁴ Matsuzaki Minoru, having conducted research in the Kanagawa region, found that young males were not happy being conscripted, haunted by rumors that they would be stationed in Taiwan while their families suffer from economic hardship; some were so happy at being rejected at the medical examination they held parties with friends and family members; and they regularly prayed to Buddha and Shinto gods so as to fail the medical exams. This situation continued up to late 1880s. For instance, a Buddhist sect’s “prayer book for the safety of the people” included one devoted to the evasion of the military service.²⁵ Indeed, when a Nagoya tax agent named Kondō Chikatarō was drafted as a military nurse, his family was greatly shocked, and many women, who had never expected him to be transferred to the continent, wept openly.²⁶

This all began to change around June 1894. Recognized by many historians as the first spurts of democratic political activism in Japanese

history,²⁷ the parliamentary movement that sought to enfranchise the Japanese citizen-subjects—at least the “productive” members of the society “qualified” in terms of the substantial amount of tax they pay—had by 1890 largely accomplished the goal it set out to implement, namely the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution (1889) and establishment of the National Diet (1890). However, powerful energies of political activism created by the movement, especially affecting the *déclassé* samurai struggling with dwindling self-worth and the difficulties of adjusting to a new industrialized, capitalist society, had to find outlets. Many former parliamentary activists, especially ex-samurai, had already turned their attention to serving the cause of Japanese imperialism overseas. Already in 1885, Ōi Kentarō and other Liberal Party activists were arrested and tried for allegedly plotting to overthrow the Korean government and reinstate Kim Okkyun and other Progressive Party members, currently exiled in Japan after the failure of the Kapsin *coup d'état* one year before.²⁸

It is not surprising, therefore, to see that veterans of the parliamentary movement as well as the conservative (in the sense that they were opposed to the “radical” modernization drive of the Meiji state and professed absolute loyalty to the emperor at the expense of “fashionable” trends of liberalism and industrialism) ex-samurai activists were galvanized to form volunteer armies and fundraising groups once the prospect of a major war with China began to loom on the horizon. Even taking this background into consideration, however, the enthusiasm and speed with which volunteer organizations had come into being only in a matter of weeks is impressive. Even though the specific numbers of the volunteers are difficult to figure out—most likely on the scale of thousands, given that some “organizations” were hardly more than a band of ex-samurai numbering less than a dozen—they were stirring up the public sphere to the extent that the Meiji state was compelled to direct local officials to “calm” them down. Eventually they had to resort to an Imperial Edict, issued on August 7, 1894, that explicitly told the volunteers to return to their “daily industries,” to leave the matters of war

to the standing army, and to curtail the volunteer activism.²⁹

The volunteer organizations showed a congregation of many diverse political groups, some of whom pursued different objectives during the parliamentary movement. In Kumamoto Prefecture, Kyūshū, where the conservative, pro-government National Rights Party (Kokkentō) used to square off against the Liberal Party in the 1880s, the old rivals banded together in the name of patriotism to promote voluntary military mobilization. Not only the National Rights Party and Liberal Party but also the local Chamber of Commerce and youth groups joined in the organization meetings, eventually leading to a charter under the banner of Hōkoku Gidan (The Righteous Corps of Patriots), detailing such activities as publicity campaigns and the recruitment of potential soldiers. The charter proclaimed that the corps was composed of “any compatriot regardless of his political affiliation” and sought to “render service as a soldier in the Japanese army outside Japan and to engage in the movement [to promote Japan’s victory in the prospective war with China] inside Japan, recruiting men of will in various regions for these tasks.”³⁰ The Kumamoto activists were not alone in shedding their previous political differences and uniting themselves under the newly galvanized sense of patriotism and nationalism following the perception of a major foreign crisis.

Like the attempts to organize the volunteer army, fundraising for the military expense became widespread. The relief department of the army reported that in August 1894 alone more than 2,000 individual donations were made every day. Again, the donors were not limited to the key members of the urban bourgeoisie and local notables, including such luminaries as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Shibusawa Eiichi, or aristocratic peers (*kazoku*), but ran the whole gamut of low-income household heads, industrialists, merchants, public groups such as firefighter’s associations, religious organizations, and even the *geisha* unions. The donations by the extreme poor were taken up by the news media as “human interest stories,” such as one story of an Osaka family who donated the not-insubstantial amount of five yen to a police station, two yen of which were originally

saved for the purpose of buying summer dresses (*yukata*) for the children. This last explanation allegedly moved the policeman in charge of the station to tears. In a story like this, the donor's "pure-minded" patriotism was usually directly tied to the reverence for the emperor and, implicitly, the direct, unmediated linkage between such a patriotic Japanese national and the emperor, in a manner that was difficult to conceive in the early modern Japan.³¹

What greatly helped foster this newfound sense of enthusiasm for the military among the people was a new type of reportage by war correspondents. Beginning with the *Tokyo nichichi shinbun*, which, regardless of its moderate and relatively subdued editorials, made full advantage of its favored status with the government to supply vivid accounts of actual battles, all major newspapers sent special correspondents to cover the campaigns as close as they could manage in real time. Overall, 129 correspondences from sixty-six companies were put in service. Many of these reporters, including Kunikida Doppo and Matsubara Iwagorō, working for *Kokumin shinbun*, were renowned writers; quite a few of them later became elected members of the House of Representatives.³² I should also add that many of them—Koizuka Ryū, Adachi Kenzō, and others—were veterans or sympathizers of the Popular Rights Movement, men not necessarily disposed to toe the government line. However, if anything, they were far more enthusiastic than the government in publicizing the war to the public as both a deadly serious national affair and an entertainment full of glorious and exciting spectacles.

Their reportage was extremely popular and usually accompanied by realistic visual renditions of the battles. "Extras" were frequently printed, whipping up the "feeding frenzy" toward more information about the war. There were allegedly twenty-five different types of picture-book pamphlets (*ezōshi*) within nine days of the declaration of war, and the people could not have enough of them. From these reports were born "war heroes." There were cases such as Captain Matsuzaki Naomi whose bravery during the Ansōng Ford Battle closely followed the classic

trope of a valiant samurai hero (this is reflected in Mizuno Toshitaka's woodblock print rendition).³³ However, one who really captured the public imagination was a bugler who "did not let go of his bugle even at the point of his death." His story was first reported in the *Tokyo nichichi* on August 9, 1894 and *Yorozu chōhō* on the next day. The story became further dramatized by other newspapers, including *Yomiuri shinbun* and *Kokumin shinbun*. Typical of war hero stories out of the Sino-Japanese War, the bugler, whose identity was eventually revealed as one Shirakami Genjirō (and later revised as Kiguchi Kohei, after the *Yomiuri* scooped its rival *Tokyo nichichi*'s "blunder"), was made the subject of a popular song, written by Imperial Guard band members Hagino Rikiji and Kikuma Yoshihiko. His story was so popular that American journalist Edwin Arnold translated a eulogy of him written by a fellow soldier into English:

Shirakami Genjiro
bugler in the line!
You shall let our Westerns know
Why the *kiku* [chrysanthemum] shrine;
Why the Sun-flag, gleaming
Bright from field to field,
Drives the dragon screaming
Makes the pig-tails yield.³⁴

The next phase for the war hero was an apotheosis as a personification of patriotic virtues in school textbooks for children. A government-approved ethics textbook published in 1902 showcased Shirakami as a model soldier. Another ethics textbook, approved in 1904, corrected the identity of the bugler to Kiguchi Kohei, listing his story under the virtue of "Courage" section.³⁵ As the war progressed, heroic death was no longer a prerequisite for being a national celebrity. Harata Jūkichi, a soldier who allegedly broke into the Hyōnmu Gate of the P'yōngyang Castle first, was also regarded as a hero, his actions chronicled in the

news media and various forms of dramatization. Ironically, his celebrity status eventually became a burden to Harada, turning him into an alcoholic and an actor for a travelling theater troupe.³⁶

The interesting difference between the celebration of great samurai heroes such as Saigō Takamori and that of the war heroes of the Sino-Japanese War was that the latter were largely anonymous, and were not endowed with any special skills or status. In other words, *anybody* could be a war hero. They did not even have to contribute significantly to the successful carrying out of a military strategy; all they had to do was to display their bravery, spirit of sacrifice, and other virtues that every (male) Japanese was theoretically in possession of. In this way, the news media and their readers interacted with one another to create the “collective signifier” of a “patriot soldier,” which was then disseminated through elementary education to the next generation of young Japanese.

Woodblock prints tell a similar narrative of the rise of nationalism, but here, the contrast between the old tropes used in depicting Japanese adventure into the “foreign” and the new ones emerging in the times of the Sino-Japanese War is noteworthy. For instance, Taisō Yoshitoshi’s *The Essential Illustrations from the Great History of Japan* (1879) shows the mythical episode of Empress Jingu’s expedition to the Korean peninsula: upon landing on the shore of Korea, the empress is shown to be carving the account of her expedition on a rock using her bow as a stylus.³⁷ Likewise, Katō Kiyomasa’s episode of “tiger hunting” in Korea during Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea in sixteenth century was reproduced as woodblock prints. With the advent of the Sino-Japanese War, woodblock prints turned to a more current-affairs-oriented approach. The depiction of the battles in P’yōngyang, Yellow Sea, and other key areas began to show a new sense of realism combined with the stylizations unique to the woodblock prints. By the time the master illustrator Kobayashi Kiyochika joined the fray, the prints had acquired a stunning quality of photographic snapshots of the actual battles, or perhaps more appropriately, screenshots from lavishly produced Hollywood movies. An interesting sidebar note, Saya Makito has found in

Nisshin sensōjikki (True Chronicles of the Sino-Japanese War) a curious account about a certain Captain Nakagawa from the Kanagawa Infantry Brigade. Nakagawa was apparently solicited by the residents of a village in Wōnsan to hunt a man-eating tiger. He succeeded in this mission by trapping the beast and killing it, holding a tiger-meat feast with the villagers.³⁸ This account, highly unrealistic given the ridiculous size of the tiger and other suspicious details, seems to be a “modern” version of Kiyomasa’s tiger-hunting, illuminating for us the process of transition from one mode of narrative (mythic) to another (nationalist). The ancient image of Korea as a site of a Japanese hero’s larger-than-life adventure was now brought back and re-dressed as the image of Korea as a site for Japan to realize its imperialist ambition.

Koreans as the “Other”

The categorization of Chinese as “enemies” has certainly fostered expressions of overt racism against them. Just as the “mainstream” American news media was happy to indulge in the derogatory expression “Japs” on an everyday basis during the Pacific War, the Japanese media indulged in the racist terms *chan-chan* or *chankoro*. The “pig-tail” was used as a sign of ethnic identification for children’s war games. Comparatively, there are less obvious cases of overt racism based on the visual markers in Japanese view of the Koreans. Aside from the (intellectual) view of Koreans as “uncivilized” people in need of “modernizing” guidance from Japan, many ordinary Japanese probably drew a blank when asked to visualize a Korean. In the accounts of visiting Korea during the Sino-Japanese War, the trope of “uncivilized” people was manifest, as Peter Duus noted in the travelogues of Japanese a decade later, in their focus on uncleanness.³⁹ Writer and journalist Matsubara Iwagorō’s records of observation of Koreans in his war correspondent records also note this uncleanness (“streets are criss-cross with mounds of human feces and streams of urine...”) as the most negative aspect, and

contrasts this with the beauty (as he sees it) of Korean clothing. The palace attire was particularly impressive, which Matsubara compares favorably to those of the Shinto priests as well as those worn by Sugawara no Michizane and Wake no Kiyomaro, examples of ancient nobility.⁴⁰ Why this contrast? It appears that Matsubara was consciously or unconsciously invoking the ancient past of Japan to illustrate Korea. Whatever is beautiful in Korea is akin to those found in the (ancient) past of Japan. Korea is reconfigured as a site at which Japan could project its own past, which it had overcome (via Meiji Restoration and the subsequent modernization) to become a powerful nation and an empire.

This aesthetic mode of objectifying Korea turns into a more explicit narrative of projection in a *Tokyo nichu nichu* editorial. A writer named Arai Yoshizaburō, arriving in Keijō (Seoul), is struck by the fact that “today’s Korea is so similar to Japan prior to the Meiji Restoration” in three ways: in the concentration of political power in the hands of only a few; in the corruption of government and threat posed by foreign forces; and in the Korean’s inability to understand the progress of culture and materials. Lighthouses and port facilities have been abandoned; railways and telegraphs are not used; and education and currency reforms are wholly inadequate. Arai then acknowledged that Korea used to be ahead of Japan, working as a transmitter of superior Chinese civilization to Japan. The implicit message was that Japan’s “success” was only an outcome of recent developments, and it was therefore relativized.⁴¹ However, at the same time, Korea was transfigured from a simply strange and different realm (*ikoku* 異国 or *iiki* 異域) to a familiar landscape in which the negative aspects of Japan could be “rediscovered.” The newly created proximity between Koreans and Japanese due to the war resulted in the “remembered past” of Japan being projected onto Korea. Through rejecting Koreans, Japanese could reconfirm their “modernized” and “honored” status in the hierarchy of civilizations, as well as in the world order of competing empires.

Concluding Thoughts

In March 1895, Li Hongzhang was sent as an envoy to meet the Japanese representatives in Shimonoseki and signed an armistice. As the result of the war settlement, Liaodong peninsula and Taiwan were permanently ceded to Japan. Qing China lost its influence in Korea, and Chinese ports, including Hangzhou and Chungking (Zhongjing), were opened up for trade. Finally, some 200 million *taels* of gold (310 million yen) were paid as indemnity. The Japanese government, despite its great victory, took a grave gamble by starting this war. Its entire war expense was equivalent to two years of the national budget. Without the indemnity payment from China, the Japanese economy could have collapsed. The Japanese military, even though generally better trained and equipped with good weapons, suffered from bad hygienic conditions, and they lost more soldiers to diseases such as dysentery and cholera than to bullets. The “official” military statistic indicates deaths due to disease amounted to 11,894 compared to 1,418 deaths in combat.⁴²

The Sino-Japanese War was indeed a pivotal conflict for East Asia and for Japan. The war’s groundbreaking military success changed the early Meiji attitude toward warfare as a realm of samurai warriors (i.e. combat specialists) into one naturally accepted as a realm of civic duty for all male citizens. The Japanese discovered that an ordinary citizen could serve as a soldier and become a hero, a position formerly reserved for mythic-historical figures like Empress Jingu or Katō Kiyomasa. The massive contribution made by the news media in fostering this new sense of “belonging” to the nation cannot be underestimated. “Mythical representation” of the foreign was now supplanted by “empirical observation” of foreigners, and in turn the Japanese were able to impose their regimes of definition, categorizations, and the simultaneous identification/rejection on Koreans and Chinese. Indeed, with the Sino-Japanese War, what Benedict Anderson called “imagined community” of all members standing with one another, reading the same news-reports, attending the same festivals and joining, either physically or figuratively,

the young soldiers in fighting against foreign enemies, was consolidated in Japan.⁴³ Popular songs and newspaper editorials sometimes displayed overt chauvinism, exclusivism, and flat-out racist derogation of the Chinese (and Koreans to a certain extent) that went beyond the early Meiji world-view of the “civilizational hierarchy” to render flesh to the abstract Social Darwinist notion of “the weak is the meat of the strong.”

The imperialistic glamour fed into the nationalistic enthusiasm, the “war fever.” Improvement in communication technologies, flourishing of news media, and incorporation of various localities into a national matrix all played their critical roles in this explosive confluence of imperialist expansion and national integration. Yet, just as the conquest of Okinawa and Taiwan set the pattern for the Sino-Japanese War, the latter also set the pattern for the Manchurian Incident (1931) and the undeclared war against China (1937-1945). Ultra-nationalism of this later period that eventually drove the empire to self-destruction was a direct descendant of the exclusive nationalism produced by the “victories” of the Sino-Japanese War. The triumphant glory of the war thus turned out to be a double-edged sword for the Japanese.

Notes :

- 1 Even though it is conventional for a Japanese historian to refer to this late-nineteenth-century conflict between China and Japan as the “first” Sino-Japanese War, in order to distinguish it from the (undeclared) Sino-Japanese War between 1931 and 1945, I will stick to the expression “Sino-Japanese War” throughout this paper to refer to the earlier conflict.
- 2 Cf. Kim Key-hiuk [Kim Kihyök], et al., *Ch’öng-Il chönjaeng üi chaejomyöng* (Seoul: Hallim Taehakkyo Ch’ulp’anbu, 1996); Young-Ick Lew [Yu Yöngik], *Tonghak nongmin ponggi wa kabo kyöngjang* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1998); Wang Hyönjong, et al., *Ch’öng-Il chönjaengi Han-Chung-Il samguk üi sangho chölllyak* (Seoul: Tongbuga Yöksa Chaedan, 2009).
- 3 See Fujimura Michio, *Nisshin sensö zengo no ajia seisaku* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 216-218, for a provocative interpretation of the Japanese

rationalization for the assassination.

- 4 Young-Ick Lew, for instance, maintains in his seminal work on the Kabo Reforms that the Tonghak leadership consisted of conservative Confucians and had collaborated closely with the Taewŏngun. See Lew, *Tonhak nongmin* (1998).
- 5 The author acknowledges that the fully rounded, transnational picture of the discourses on the Sino-Japanese War must include the responses by Koreans to the intrusion of Japanese (and Qing Chinese) soldiers, and regrets that in this very brief paper he did not have time or energy to engage with this topic.
- 6 See Kyu Hyun Kim, *The Age of Visions and Arguments: Parliamentarianism and the National Public Sphere in Early Meiji Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Asia Center, 2007), for a critique of the view that the Meiji government leaders had unerringly and masterfully planned the course of Japan's politico-economic development between the Restoration and 1890. Kim sees this process as an arduous journey of trials and errors on the part of the Meiji leaders, coming to a series of difficult negotiations with their civilian critics, i.e. former samurai activists of the Popular Rights Movement, local notables, urban intellectuals, and even women. For a classic statement of the view that champions the Meiji leader's prescience, see George Akita, *The Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan, 1868-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).
- 7 Cf. Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in Late Meiji Japan* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1986).
- 8 Some may consider the incorporation of Hokkaido into Japan proper as another case of "try-out" for the colonization of Taiwan and eventually Korea.
- 9 Cf. "Teitei no gan[?] wo zasetsu suru wa ashū shinkō no shudan nari," *Jiyū shinbun*, December 24, 1884.
- 10 "Nihon-hei wa buryoku wo udai ni shimesu beshi," *Jiyū shinbun*, December 27, 1884.
- 11 Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Asia Center, 2008), 97-110, 130-132, 158-163. Larsen's arguments are supported by the research of Fujimura Michio from the perspective of Japanese history.
- 12 *Mutsu Munemitsu monjo*, 94-29, Kensei Shiryōshitsu, National Diet Library, quoted in Fujimura Michio, 222.
- 13 "Hankyaku Kim Ok-kyun wo kokusu," *Jiyū shinbun*, March 3, 1894; "Sen,"

- Jiyū shinbun*, April 13, 1894; “Taikan no kesshin,” *Jiyū shinbun*, May 2, 1894.
- 14 Harada Keiichi, *Nisshin sensō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2008), 20-34; William Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 48-68. Beasley considers Ōtori’s aggressive maneuvers in Korea as essentially a failure, and Inoue Kaoru’s subsequent ministership following October 1894 as more open to co-operation with Koreans “in the pursuit of common interest” despite his policy appearing to be “a classic example of economic imperialism.” Beasley, 51-52.
- 15 John K. Fairbank, et al. eds., *The I.G. in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs, 1868-1907*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 976.
- 16 “Japan’s Attack on Korea,” *The North China-Herald*, June 29, 1894, quoted in S.C.M. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power and Primacy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 119.
- 17 Fujimura Michio, 216-218; Hara Keiichi, 36-39.
- 18 Robert Eskildsen, “Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan’s 1874 Expedition to Taiwan,” *American Historical Review* 107, #2 (April 2002), 408-412.
- 19 “Dai Nihon tai Chōsen seiryaku: Chōsenkoku no dokuritsu wo ikasuru, (II),” *Tokyo nichichi shinbun*, April 5, 1890. All editorial quotations are from Kitahara Sumako, ed. *Shiryō: Shinbun shasetsu ni miru Chōsen* [Hereafter SSS] (Tokyo: Ryokuin Shobō, 1995), vol. 2, 475-476.
- 20 “Heiwa oyobi kōei,” *Tokyo nichichi shinbun*, June 12, 1894; “Nanno sōmō zo,” *Tokyo nichichi shinbun*, July 7, 1894. SSS, 507-509, 516-517.
- 21 “Aikokushin,” 1894/7/17, “Heiminshugi no kōki,” *Jiyū shinbun*, August 22, 1894.
- 22 “Kyokoku no senshi,” *Jiyū shinbun*, October 6, 1894.
- 23 Hiyama Yukio, *Kindai Nihon no keisei to nisshin sensō* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 2001), 64-71; see also Urs Matthias Zachmann, *China and Japan in the Late Meiji Period* (London: Routledge, 2009), 32-37.
- 24 Cf. Ichinose Toshiya, *Kindai Nihon no chōheisei to shakai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2004); Katō Yōko, *Chōheisei to kindai Nihon, 1888-1945* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1995).
- 25 Matsuzaki Minoru, “Heishi no nisshin sensō taikan: Tokyo-fu Tama chiiki wo jirei ni,” in Hiyama Yukio, ed. *Kindai Nihon no keisei to nisshin sensō*, 374-376.

- 26 Katō Kiyofumi, “Aru ‘kokumin’ heishi no tanjō,” in Hiyama Yukio, ed. *Kindai Nihon no keisei to nisshin sensō*, 394-397.
- 27 See Kyu Hyun Kim, 2007, *op cit*. Also consult Irokawa Daikichi, *The Culture of the Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988): in Japanese, see Inada Masahiro, *Jiyū minken no bunkashi* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2000) and Arai Katsuhiko, ed. *Jiyū minken to kindai shakai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2004).
- 28 See Ōsaka Jiken Kenkyūkai, ed., *Ōsaka jiken no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 1982).
- 29 Saya Makito, *Nisshin sensō: ‘kokumin’ no tanjō* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2009), 144-147.
- 30 *Kyūshū nichi nichi shinbun*, July 1, 1894, quoted in Harada Keiichi, “Kokkenha no nisshin sensō,” *Bukkyō daigaku bungakubu ronshū* 81 (March 1997), 32-33.
- 31 Harada Keiichi, “Nihon kokumin no sansennetsu,” in *Nisshin sensō no shakaishi*, eds. Ōtani Tadashi, Harada Keiichi (Osaka: Forum A, 1994), 12-23.
- 32 Saya Makito, 48-67.
- 33 Mizuno Toshitaka, *Anjō no watashi daigekisen Matsuzaki tai’i yūmō*, 1894: Harada Keiichi, “Nihon kokumin,” 87-92.
- 34 *New York Times*, December 10, 1894. The precise meaning of “Westerns” in this poem is unclear without a comparison to the original Japanese text.
- 35 Harada Keiichi, “Nihon kokumin,” 92-93; Saya Makito, 92-105.
- 36 Saya Makito, 106-108.
- 37 Kang Tōksang, ed., *Nishiki-e no naka no Chōsen to Chūgoku* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007), 13-15, 26-31.
- 38 Saya Makito, 108-109.
- 39 Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 397-422.
- 40 Matsubara Iwagorō, *Seijin yoroku* (Tokyo: Minyūsha, 1896), quoted in Saya Makito, 58-59.
- 41 Arai Yoshizaburō, “Tōkan irai no shoken,” *Tokyo nichi nichi shinbun*, July 28, 1894.
- 42 Hara Keiichi, “Nihon kokumin,” 283.
- 43 Benedict O. Anderson, *The Imagined Community* (London: Verso, 1993).

〈Abstract〉

The Sino–Japanese War (1894–1895): Japanese National Integration and Construction of the Korean “Other”

Kyu Hyun Kim

The significance of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) for the evolution of the international relations in East Asia in the twentieth century as well as the unfolding of national histories in China, Japan and Korea has been long recognized. Historiographically speaking, diplomatic relations, military strategies and political intrigues have received a lion's share of attention. In the present essay, I would like to focus on the cultural and social impact of the war on construction of dual images: the changing Japanese self-image of themselves as a “citizen-subject” of an integrated nation, and the image of Koreans as the “Other” to be colonized and civilized. I will examine some of the more recent studies of the Sino-Japanese War that have adopted the approaches of social and cultural history as well as some of the late nineteenth century Japanese discourses on the war, expressed through various forms of civilian news media and popular culture. The goal is to situate these discursive activities in the proper context of the political, military and diplomatic relations surrounding the war, bridging the artificial gap created between these diverse approaches. I hope that this brief exercise will help illuminate an important conjuncture in Japanese history, to which the processes of “national integration” and “imperial expansion” of Japan were converged, resulting in a new type of Asian nation-state that had accepted imperial wars as a critical component of its identity, and how such processes paved the way for the eventual rationalization for colonization of the Korean people.

Keywords: The First Sino-Japanese War, The Qing Empire, Joseon Korea, Meiji Japan, Japanese news media, woodblock prints, nationalism, national integration, Japanese imperialism, war propaganda, war heroes.

〈국문초록〉

청일전쟁(1894-1895): 일본의 국민 통합, 그리고 ‘타자’로써 조선상(像) 만들기

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청일전쟁(1894-1895)은 20세기 동아시아 국제관계의 변화라는 측면 그리고 이후 한중일 각국의 역사 전개란 측면에서 사건의 중요성이 일찍이 주목되어 왔다. 종래의 연구사를 중심으로 살펴보면 외교관계, 군사전략, 정치적 흐름 등이 주된 관심의 대상으로 다루어졌다.

본 논문은 청일전쟁을 통해 일본이 창출했던 상(像)이 끼친 문화적, 사회적 영향력에 초점을 맞추어 논의를 전개하고자 한다. 일본이 창출했던 상이란 다음과 같은 것이다. 곧, 변화된 일본인 스스로의 이미지를 통합된 국민국가의 ‘시민-주체’로써 표현하고, 대조적으로 조선인의 이미지는 문명화가 필요하고 결국 식민지화 될 수밖에 없는 ‘타자’로써 나타난 것이다. 이를 위해 본고는 사회사 및 문화사적 측면에서 청일전쟁을 분석하는 최근의 연구들을 검토함과 동시에, 다양한 민간 언론과 대중 문화를 통해 당시 일본 사회에 나타난 전쟁에 대한 담론을 살펴본다.

본 연구는 일본사회에 나타난 여러 담론들을 청일전쟁 당시 정치, 군사, 외교사 상의 적절한 맥락 위에서 살펴본다. 이를 통해 청일전쟁을 연구하는 다양한 방법론들 사이에서 발생했던 불가피한 간극을 좁혀보고자 한다.

청일전쟁 시기의 ‘국민통합’과 ‘제국주의적 팽창’ 과정은 다음과 같은 결과로 나타났다. 곧 일본은 청일 양 제국간의 전쟁을 스스로의 정체성을 구축하는 결정적인 요소로 수용하였고, 아시아 국민국가의 새로운 유형으로 등장하게 되는 것이다. 위 과정을 살핀 본 연구의 시도가 일본사의 결정적 국면을 조명하는데 도움이 되기를 바란다. 동시에 이상의 과정이 어떻게 한국 병합을 최종적으로 정당화하는 문제에 이용되었는지 해명하는데 일조하기 바란다.

주제어: 청일전쟁, 청, 조선, 일본, 일본의 언론 매체, 일본 목판화(우끼요에), 국민주의, 국민통합, 일본 제국주의, 전쟁 프로파간다, 전쟁 영웅.

