Janus-Faced Colonial Policy: Making Sense of the Contradictions in Japanese Administrative Rhetoric and Practice in Korea

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ABSTRACT

Studies on Japan’s assimilation policies in Korea (1910–1945) frequently criticize the contradiction between the rhetoric of inclusiveness Japan used to describe its administration and the policy of discrimination it advanced in the colony. This paper argues this contradiction is characteristic of other administrations that the colonizers employed in territories contiguous with the colonial homeland, including the French in Algeria and the Germans in Alsace and Lorraine. It contrasts this peripheral expansion with the intensive assimilation efforts found in internal nation-building expansion, and the less intrusive external expansion where colonizers built social walls to separate colonizer from colonized. In Korea, evidence of this contradiction between rhetoric and practice appeared in various social, economic, and political areas. This paper emphasizes the contradiction found in the education system established by the government general, which offered Koreans elementary schooling of a lesser quality than that provided Japanese both in Japan and in Korea. Over the decades of colonial rule in Korea the Japanese proposed a number of reforms that promised to close the gap between colonizer and colonized education, and scheduled others that due to Japan’s defeat in the Asian Pacific wars never materialized. Thus it remains an open question as to whether Japan’s assimilation policies would have succeeded in closing the rhetoric-practice gap had the colonizers had more time. Japanese relations with other minority peoples, including Okinawans and Ainu, suggest that, while one factor, time alone might not have narrowed this gap to sufficiently assimilate Koreans, both those residing on the peninsula and in the colonial homeland.

Keywords: colonial history, assimilation, Korea-Japan relations, policy and practice, peripheral expansion

Introduction

A 1938 gathering of 105 Japanese and Koreans was convened to review and comment on an ambitious plan designed to coordinate Korean attitudes, behavior, and activities with the increasingly disturbing wartime conditions. The purpose of this plan, titled the “Chōsen sōtokufu jikyoku taisaku chōsakai shōnan tōshinan shian” 朝鮮総督府時局対策調査会諮問答申案 (The Chōsen Government General investigative meeting to devise a counterplan to meet the present situation), reads as follows: “To attain in both name and reality complete
[Korean] imperialization (teikoku kōminka 帝国皇民化) [by forging] a Japanese-Korean unified body (naisen ittai 内鮮一体) to confront future complications initiated by the [wartime] circumstances” (Chōsen Government General 1938). The document suggested that the extraordinary circumstances that Japan faced had finally convinced the Chōsen Government General (here after GGK) of the need to close a fundamental inconsistency in its colonial policies, which had promoted discriminatory practices contradictory to its rhetoric of unity. The gradual assimilation process promoted over its first decades in Korea could no longer be sustained as Japan’s limited war with China escalated following the July 7, 1937 Marco Polo Incident. Meeting the circumstances of the times (jikyoku 時局) required a more radical approach that accelerated Korean assimilation.

The GGK organized the gathering to collect ideas on ways in which the two peoples could cooperate to strengthen naisen ittai. Transcripts carrying the participants’ discussions, however, underlined the divisions that had separated the two peoples since annexation in 1910. Whether by choice or design, these discussions appeared in two stages, the first dominated by the colonizers and the second by the colonized. They also differed in content. Japanese participants mimicked ideas frequently found in previous reform efforts: building more schoolhouses, limiting the Korean language media, and Koreans adopting Japanese names. Koreans, on the other hand, pushed ways to close the gap between Japan’s colonial rhetoric and policy: the need to integrate neighborhoods, to recognize Korean professional credentials, and to accept Japan-based addresses of Koreans as legal.

It was, however, commentary by Yi Sŭngu 李升雨 that targeted the fundamental issue behind this contradiction: the Japanese colonizers’ refusal to recognize Koreans as fellow subjects. He lamented that some Japanese maintained antiquated views of Korea as it was “twenty years ago. They may know a Korea [of that time] but they do not know contemporary Korea.” He continued: Japanese have to accept Koreans as their ethnic brothers. We can go around saying naisen ittai, naisen ittai, but if Japanese respond to Korean efforts to identify themselves as Japanese by refusing to accept them as such then people “will do as they please” (katte ni suru 勝手にする) (Chōsen Government General 1938, 365–67).

Criticism of this contradiction (J. mujun, K. mosun 矛盾) in Japanese rhetoric and practice has become a staple of discussion on Japan’s assimilation policy (Kwon 2015; Walraven 1999; Ishida 1998; Yamanaka 1983). Yet this contradiction, hardly unique to Japan’s Korea policy, plagued administrations of other colonizers who governed territories at their peripheries. Similar to the Japanese, these colonizers compromised their stated intention to assimilate the colonized as nationals by implementing discriminatory practices characteristic of colonial administrations in more distant territories (Caprio 2009, 6–12). Assimilation’s failure in part is attributable to colonized indifference or antagonism toward the imposed culture. Yi Sŭngu’s statement, however, reveals a second, potentially more powerful, cause: the colonizer’s failure to recognize as fellow nationals even those colonized who embraced assimilation policy. Japanese efforts to strengthen naisen ittai would be for naught should the colonial administration fail to correct this fundamental
contradiction between rhetoric and practice.

That this contradiction appeared in other peripheral colonizer-colonized relationships suggests its value in formulating a more objective understanding of the Japanese-Korean colonial relationship. This paper considers this colonial relationship as one part of three levels—internal, peripheral, and external—that differed in the role that the colonizers saw the colonized peoples assuming in their empire, which in turn determined the administrative policy that the colonizers would use to govern the colony. At the extreme internal (inclusive) and external (exclusive) levels the governing policy that the colonizers introduced appears to have been rather predictable: The former encouraged an intensive assimilation policy that accepted the colonized as fellow subjects; the latter erected and maintained barriers to protect the social distance separating colonizer from colonized. At the intermediate peripheral level, however, inconsistency was endemic as the contiguous geo-racial identity imagined by the colonizer promised an inclusive relationship that rarely if ever materialized. Through examination of this diversity in colonizer-colonized relationships this paper aims to clarify the fundamental rhetoric-policy contradiction found in Japanese administration over Korea.

**Internal, Peripheral, and External Expansion**

Ishida Takeshi (1998, 50), comparing Japan assimilation policy with that of the French, compliments the broad “natural legal human” centered approach (shizenhōteki ningenkan 自然法的人間観) of the latter against the limited “national spirit” (kokumin seishin 国民精神) centered approach of the former. Ishida's positive appraisal of French assimilation policy stems from the diverse range of peoples on which this colonial power imposed this policy. Would, however, Yi Sŏngu’s frustrations been quenched had the French, rather than the Japanese, colonized the Korean peninsula? Perhaps not. The French did establish specified conditions for the individual to gain citizenship. This suggests their harboring a more serious attitude toward assimilating these peoples. However, this administration was not without its contradictions. The conditions they set were stringent and even if met did not necessarily eliminate colonizer-colonized differences. In its Senegal colony, for example, the French administration dubbed colonized subjects who qualified “native citizens” to distinguish them from “French citizens” (Buell 1928, 946). By the turn of the century a number of French thinkers and colonial officials participated in a determined campaign to discredit assimilation as a viable colonial policy due to insurmountable “mental gaps” they imagined existing between the colonized and the colonizer (Betts 1961, 64–69, 116).

It is also inaccurate to differentiate, as many have, between an inclusive French assimilation colonial practice and an exclusive British association colonial policy. The British did introduce to colonies geographically distanced from the

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1 To be recognized as such the Senegalese had to have served in a French public or private office for a minimum of ten years, be literate in French, possess substantial means of livelihood, and be of “good character” (Buell 1928, 946).
United Kingdom an association policy that maintained social distance between colonizer and colonized. However, in the 1830s they did consider a more inclusive policy for their Indian colony. At this time Thomas Macaulay (1800–1859) joined other colonial officials in arguing for British education goals designed to form “a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (Macaulay 1999, 171). The Indian Mutiny of 1857 contributed to silencing this discussion there, and perhaps in other places where the English contemplated introducing direct inclusive colonial rule as well.

Closer to home, however, England maintained a policy in its immediate peripheral territories that advanced a direct political assimilation. The government granting these colonial subjects representation in Westminster while indirectly pressuring them to incorporate aspects of English culture. It was this peripheral colonial expansion, namely English “unions” with Wales (1535, 1542), Scotland (1707), and Ireland (1800), that attracted Japanese attention as they prepared to annex Korea in 1910. Through these unions the English aimed to prevent the Celtic peoples from forming alliances with England’s enemies when it engaged the French and then the Germans in war. Attempts by Scotland to ally with France date back to the 1295 “Auld Alliance” and continued until 1745, when Highlander Prince Charles Stuart (the Pretender) sought French assistance, and later asylum, during his rebellion against the English (Mackie 1964, 274–81; Clyde 1998). These examples of English subjugation, however, are attributed little if any attention in British colonial historiography. Lawrence James’ (1994) The Rise of the British Empire contains chapters on India, South Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and other members of this vast empire, but just a few pages on United Kingdom “union” expansion.

The above suggests the need for a reconsideration of this historiography, particularly our definition of “colonized.” A glance at colonial histories suggests a rather consistent pattern of peoples who gained their independence from colonial subjugation included as such, and those who remain integral parts of a sovereign state as not. The excluded includes the Celtic peoples discussed above as well as peoples of traditional local cultures that a hegemonic power absorbed through its nation-building efforts. Here we find two levels of assimilation that differed in intensity: a concentrated nation-forming effort that integrated peoples by felling local barriers and eradicating local cultures, and a more relaxed effort designed to marginally incorporate peoples of annexed peripheral territories. Combined with the indirect association approach prescribed for external territories, this suggests the need for a broader understanding of “colonized.”

More inclusive histories do exist. Michael Hechter (1975) introduces the terms internal and external colonies to explain why the Anglo-English failed to assimilate the Celtic peoples, who remained politically connected to the United Kingdom but were never as culturally integrated as the peoples of the English shires. He categorizes this activity as “internal,” in contrast with the “external” expansion that the British conducted in Africa and Asia. Hechter’s framework does

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2 One example of this pressure is known in Wales as the “Brad y Llyfrau Gleision” [Treachery of the blue books] where the English viciously attacked the Welsh language (Roberts 1996, 182-89).
not consider as colonial the intensive nation building efforts labeled in this paper as internal colonialism. Here the colonizers aimed to assimilate peoples whose membership in the new state was non-negotiable, deemed appropriate due to their long-term residence within this state's cartographical borders. What Hechter calls "internal" colonialism corresponds here with an intermediate, peripheral-level, expansion. At this level, indigenous residents of annexed territories contiguous to the colonial homeland were fed promises of assimilation under conditions that often discouraged their cooperation. A third external level, where the colonizers found their imperial acquisitions to be both racially and geographically different, coincides in both name and practice with Hechter's external expansion.

Much of this expansion took place during a period famously labeled by Eric Hobsbawm (1989) as the “Age of Empire.” This interwar period, resting roughly between the final shots of the Franco-Prussian War (1871) and the initial shots of World War I (1914), witnessed a period of unprecedented colonial activity that incorporated peoples at all three levels. Examples of internal colonial expansion included the well-known efforts led by indigenous groups in Italy, Germany, and Japan that assembled loosely conjoined local political units into unified states. Other efforts strove to bring together divided allegiances in long established states. The United States post-Civil War Age of Reconstruction aimed to reintegrate the vanquished southern states with those of the victorious north. In France, as Eugen Weber (1976) so eloquently describes, the central French state intensified efforts to make the “peasants [of its southern provinces] into Frenchmen.” These peoples “had to be taught manners, morals, literacy, a knowledge of French, and of France, a sense of the legal and institutional structure beyond their immediate community” (Weber 1976, 5). An education, compulsory and patriotic, emerged as the primary vehicle that drove the process of creating the internal subject. Its curriculum centered on replacing the local with the national by arming its pupils with a unified national history, culture, and dialect.

With the consolidation of national power, leaders, where feasible, annexed territories at their peripheries to strengthen internal security. The relative proximity of these territories to the homeland required colonizers to create an illusion of colonizer-colonized ethnic affinity that approached, but never equaled, that created to consolidate the internal state. Colonial administrations in peripheral territories also exploited education as an institution to drive assimilation. However, the intensity at this level paled in comparison with that imposed on the internal subject. It was generally shorter in duration, thinner in content, and conducted in a foreign language. Examples of peripheral expansion, including French Algeria and German Alsace and Lorraine, along with the English Celtic unions referred to above, frequently gained mention by Japanese concerning Korean administrative policy. Other less-frequently mentioned examples of this colonial activity included the Native American and black populations in the United States, “Reconstruction” in the American south following the Civil War, and the early Japanese additions of Ainu in Ezo (present-day Hokkaido) and the people of the Ryukyu Kingdom (present-day Okinawa).

The third level, external expansion, saw the late nineteenth century
colonial powers exert little if any effort to impose its culture on the indigenous peoples of these distant territories. Here the human and natural resources that the colonizers required for industrial development and war waging provided the primary drive to colonize. Over the first half of the twentieth century the importance of these possessions increased as colonial powers monopolized the resources of their colonies at a time highlighted by two wars fought on a scale hitherto unseen in human history. Security was occasionally offered as a reason for external expansion, but primarily in the context of a particular territory’s value in protecting other external positions. British officials, for example, described the Suez Canal in its Egyptian colony as the “lifeline” for India, the “jewel” of its empire (James 1994, 204). With the exception of occasional commentary by assimilation purists, the colonizers exerted little effort at integrating the external subject at a level approaching that of the peripheral, and much less the internal subject. Racist Social Darwinian arguments similar to those of assimilation’s critics criticized idealist advocacy of the colonizer introducing advanced political, social, and economic institutions to these territories. External land-grabbing activities over the nineteenth-century age of empire reconfigured what had been, from the colonizers’ perspective at least, a rather bland southern hemisphere map into a colorful collage of political swaths representing the handful of European states that grabbed land across the African and Asian continents.

Learning to Expand: Japan’s Colonial Education
The Tokugawa regime gathered second-hand information on state-sponsored expansion over the Edo period (1603–1868) primarily through its Dutch contacts in Nagasaki. As we shall see below, thinkers from this period occasionally advised that Japan needed to incorporate lands at its peripheries to strengthen internal security. It was the newly minted Meiji government, which assumed power just a few years prior to the outbreak of European expansion that undertook dedicated action in this direction. Determined to consolidate the over 270 Edo-era domains into a modern centralized nation-state, the Meiji government organized the Iwakura Mission, a delegation of more than one hundred bureaucratic and student travelers to circle the globe in search of information to advance the centralizing process. The travelers, who left Japan’s shores in December 1871, also gained information (albeit less directly) on peripheral and external expansion. Towards this end, the Iwakura Mission could not have timed its journey any better. Coming just at the onset of the age of empire, the Mission witnessed expansion activity at multiple levels in most of the fourteen states it visited. The five-volume official record left by the Mission’s historians is filled with copious statistics and informative impressions that the travelers accumulated during their field trips to schools, museums, military training grounds, and other institutions that supported state formation. Discussions with persons of influence augmented this education. Given the timing, Japan also had begun to annex peripheral territories and was eyeing others, it seems most probable that territorial consolidations and annexations often surfaced as topics for discussion. By the time the Mission departed, Japan had annexed peripheral territory to its north (Ezo
蝦夷, now Hokkaido), and was beginning a process that would incorporate the Ryukyu kingdom into its empire. They were exposed to education at this level in the United States capital where they visited schools that taught Native Americans and recently emancipated black slaves. Post Franco-Prussian expansion by the two belligerents, France and Germany, was occurring just as the Japanese were finalizing their travel route.

The Mission’s itinerary offered its participants limited opportunity to directly observe external expansion, though they did make port calls in Egypt, Ceylon, French Indochina (present-day Vietnam), and Hong Kong. In addition to discussions, field trips, such as those to museums, augmented the Japanese knowledge on expansion. In London, members of the tour visited the South Kensington (now the Victoria and Albert) Museum where they learned of the contribution that external territorial possessions made in “lay[ing] the foundations of [England’s] national prosperity” to actualizing one half of the “rich country, strong military” (fukoku kyōhei 富国強兵) slogan that Meiji Japan had adopted as its self-strengthening mission. The riches that expansion procured, the Japanese account noted, contributed to the state’s “strong military.” As an example, tour historian Kume Kunitake 久米邦武 recorded that British treasures gained from its empire had protected the country from Napoleon’s invasions across the European continent earlier that century (Kume 2002, 57).

The travelers had ample opportunity to observe the importance that European states placed on peripheral territories to central state security. This lesson, hardly new, was one that the Japanese had understood decades prior to the 1868 birth of the Meiji government. Similar late Edo-era opinions on this began to appear just after the arrival of Russian explorers to Ezo and its surrounding islands. One early argument was authored by Honda Toshiaki 本田利明 (1744–1821) in 1798. His A Secret Plan of Government (Keisei Hisaku 経世秘策) argued that the only reasonable answer to the Russian threat was expansion into available territories to the north (Keene 1952, 105). Honda’s writing influenced Aizawa Seishisai 会沢正志斎 (1782–1863), who in 1825 released his New Thesis (Shinron 新論) that urged the Tokugawa regime to both fortify Japan’s coastal barriers and “annex the Ezo islands and absorb the barbarian tribes of the [Asian] continent” (Wakabayashi 1991, 250). Aizawa’s ideas further influenced Yoshida Shōin 吉田松陰 (1830–1859) who emphasized expansion in his school that boasted the attendance of future Japanese prime minister Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (1841–1909), among other influential members of Meiji Japan (Earl 1964, 173, 174). Itō, who participated in the Iwakura Mission, was the sitting prime minister when Japan gained Taiwan through war, and later served as Japan’s first resident general in

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3 Japan gained control over Ezo via the Treaty of Shimoda 下田条約 that it signed with Russia in May 1855. The first Meiji government contact with the Ryukyu kingdom came in January 1872, just one month after the Iwakura Mission departed.

4 Edo-era Japan saw occasions where the Tokugawa regime extended its influence into Ezo (Walker 2001). In addition, during this time the Satsuma domain exerted control over parts of the Ryukyu kingdom (Hellyer 2009).
Korea. His input on the discussion of Japan’s Korean policy no doubt was most respected in his day.

One other Yoshida student, Yamagata Aritomo 山県有朋 (1838–1922), occupied the position of prime minister in 1890 when he delivered to Japan’s National Diet a speech that delineated the relationship between internal and peripheral expansion as follows:

The independence and security of the nation depend first upon the protection of the line of sovereignty (shukensen 主権線) and then the line of advantage (riekisen 利益線) . . . If we wish to maintain the nation’s independence among the powers of the world at the present time, it is not enough to guard only the line of sovereignty; we must also defend the line of advantage . . . and within the limits of the nation’s resources gradually strive for that position (quoted in Pyle 1996, 135).

Yamagata may have had the early 1870s image of Korea as a dagger aimed at Japan’s heart in mind as he spoke before the Diet. His point on this occasion was that establishing control over the peripheral lines of interest was critical to national security. The peninsula as a threat lay less in Korea’s actual military capacity than in the potential of a stronger and potentially antagonistic third party assuming control over this “ill-governed” (akusei 悪政) peripheral territory. Peripheral expansion held defensive purposes in the additional layer of security it provided. Yet this added security also was useful for offensive purposes in the confidence it lent states aiming to expand further or initiate aggressive military action with less fear of retaliatory action. Would Japan have risked expanding deeper onto the Asian continent or from engaging the United States in war in 1941 had territories at its immediate periphery remained independent? In addition to its function as buffer, acquiring peripheral territory also required the colonizers gaining support from the colonized. One purpose for the colonizer employing assimilation was to strengthen colonizer-colonized bonds to elicit this support, particularly during times of military crisis. These relations, however, never approached those among peoples integrated at the internal level as colonizers strove to maintain a social distance from the colonized.5

At this time assimilation proved to be an internationally accepted policy that states employed when administering territories incorporated at their peripheries, as was the Korean peninsula to the Japanese archipelago. Assimilation, however, had enjoyed a longer history in Edo Japan. It was employed as a colonial policy by the Tokugawa regime in Ezo lands as a counter to the frequent presence of Russian explorers in the late eighteenth century. This initial effort was short-lived but renewed soon after the Meiji regime overthrew the Tokugawa shogunate. Japanese colonial thinkers refined this policy after incorporating Okinawa and Taiwan so that its skeleton was assembled by the time Japan annexed Korea.

Following annexation, discussion turned to how best to adjust assimilation

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5 Illustrative of this is the present-day status of indigenous peoples of Hokkaido and Okinawa who retain elements of their traditional culture and language.
to the Korean situation. Many Japanese writing on their country’s new acquisition foresaw the ease in which assimilation would succeed due to the close ethnic proximity that the colonizer and colonized shared. Japanese would have little problem assimilating Koreans. Tones changed following the 1919 March First Independence demonstrations as Japanese increasingly voiced dissenting views toward their country’s assimilation efforts. These voices split between negative views contending that either Korean behavior demonstrated the people as unworthy for assimilation or that, to the contrary, Japanese were ill prepared to assimilate a foreign people. A more optimistic voice asserted that the policy would succeed if only the GGK erased the contradiction that pitted assimilation rhetoric against colonial policy.

Contradictions in Japan’s Colonial Assimilation of Korea

In 1895, with Japan’s annexation of Taiwan, Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi commissioned opinion papers from Westerners and Japanese in search of advice on how best to govern territories ceded to Japan as war reparations from China. Hara Takashi 原敬, who previously had served the Japanese government as vice minister of foreign affairs and as ambassador to Korea, contributed one such report. In it, Hara argued strongly for assimilation, an opinion that the future prime minister would maintain throughout his career. In 1920, angered over Japan’s gross mishandling of the March First Independence Movement, he penned an opinion paper that blasted Japan’s colonial rule in Korea. Here the prime minister criticized what he saw as an obvious contradiction in what the colonial government professed as its goals in Korea and the policies it developed to advance Koreans toward these goals. In his arguments Hara attacked the aggressive military rule (budan seiji 武断政治) approach that had guided Japanese rule to date over its part in preventing the political and social union of the home islands and the peninsula. As corrective measures he advised that legal and education institutions be unified. People from bureaucrats in the GGK to prisoners in the colony’s jails, he advised, had to be afforded equal treatment without prejudice. For Japanese rule in Korea to enjoy success the administration would have to undertake stronger efforts to erase these and other discriminatory practices that distinguished Japanese from Korean residents by ethnic birthright (Hara 1920).

Hara Takashi died the following year when a disgruntled railway employee stabbed him to death as he waited for a train at Tokyo Station to take him to Kyoto. He did live to oversee the ambitious reform package that ushered in Japan’s era of “cultural rule” (bunka seiji 文化政治) under the administration of Saitō Makoto (齋藤実 1858–1936). The reforms introduced at this time succeeded in silencing international criticism over Japan’s violent handling of the independence movement, and coopting a large part of the intellectual Korean resistance movement to its rule (Robinson 1988). While relatively more accommodating to Korean development than the previous military rule, this policy also failed to shed the contradictions inherent in peripheral assimilation. It can also be argued that the reforms, which rendered Koreans more transparent and Japanese less so, also increased the surveillance, and thus the control, that the colonizers held over the
In his opinion paper, Hara Takashi specifically highlighted education-related problems in his criticism. The colonial center extended to peoples at both levels access to education, but to different degrees. Given the role that education plays in determining the recipients’ social position its importance cannot be understated. From the early nineteenth-century states came to Prussia for guidance when, in response to its wartime defeat by the French, it became one of the first states to institute a patriotic compulsory education system (reprinted in Cousin 1930). Decades later, the Frenchman Colonel Eugène Stoffel (1821–1907), who had spent three years in Berlin, credited this education and the conscription military service system it supported with providing the difference that delivered Prussia victory over France in 1871 (The Nation March 30, 1871). The Meiji government strongly hinted at its aspiration for compulsory education in its drafting of the First Education Act of 1871 where it pledged as a goal to create a society in which “no community… [had] an illiterate family, nor a family. . . an illiterate person.” The following year it introduced a compulsory military service system. The Japanese strengthened their schools’ nationalist elements in a second Education Act unveiled in 1886, which was drafted with an emphasis on strengthening patriotism over disseminating knowledge. Minister of Education Mori Arinori (森有礼 1847–1889) summarized this reform’s value in 1887 as promoting an education that nurtured “men of character” over teaching them reading, writing, and arithmetic. These “men of character. . . are those persons who live up fully to their responsibilities as Imperial subjects” (quoted in Hall 1973, 398).

Japan installed education systems in its peripheral territories, but at a level that paled in comparison to that of the homeland. Gaps between the two systems reveal the present perceptions and the future aspirations that the colonial government held with regard to their colonial charges. Differences emerged in Koreans starting their education later, and finishing it earlier, than did Japanese. As in principle teaching was to be conducted in Japanese, Korean students enrolled in this system studied in a foreign language, thus slowing their progress. The curriculum being packed with long hours devoted to Japanese language instruction further constricted its content and subject matter. Contradictory to its assimilation rhetoric of unity, the system segregated Japanese from Koreans as the two received their education in separate systems. Perhaps the most important discrepancy was that the ordinance contained no mention of making this education compulsory. These terms shared characteristics found in other peripheral education systems that Japan installed in Hokkaido, Okinawa, and Taiwan (Caprio 2009, chapter two).

The GGK professed as a general aim of this education to correct the shortcomings of Choson-era (朝鮮時代 1392–1910) education. Its criticism of this education mirrored that which the Meiji regime voiced of that of the Edo-era (江戸時代), a system “so superficial and shallow that [pupils left just as] ignorant of the principle of things as when they entered” (quoted in Lincicome 1995, 2). At the time the first education ordinance was being prepared Governor General Terauchi Masataka (寺内正孝) insisted that sŏdang (書堂) schools employed an “erroneous method of education [that taught students] to dislike work and indulge
in useless and empty talk. . .” Japanese education would instill in the minds of students “the detestation of idleness and the love of real work, thrift, and diligence” (quoted in Chōsen Government General 1935, 9–10). The task of correcting these problems, however, did not ignite the urgency seen at the onset of Japan’s internal centralization process. The GGK waited another three decades, when Japan was desperately embroiled in war, to announce in 1940 its intention to install a compulsory education system from 1950, later revised to 1946 (Takahashi 1944, 2–8). Despite Japanese officials’ views of the colonized as inferior, and their stated goal of nurturing them toward assimilation, the segregated and inferior education system that the colonial government installed confirmed that the peripheral subject would assume a position of inferiority to the Japanese settler. Should they possess the means and the ambition to continue their education they would have to enroll in a two-year preparatory program to compensate for the two-year difference in elementary school education.6

The 1920 reform measures introduced in the aftermath of the March First Independence Movement included several advancements in the peninsula’s education policy, with more following in a second education ordinance unveiled in February 1922. Among the more significant changes were plans to increase the number of schools from 556 to 870 and to extend the number of elementary school years that Koreans needed to graduate from four to six. The reforms also advised curriculum changes that included adding science classes and upgrading English language classes from elective to required (Chōsen Government General 1990, 73–141). One other reform of significance manifested itself in this second education ordinance. The document outlining the ordinance, apparently distributed at a meeting, contained an amendment to an article that initially limited settler schools to “Japanese” students. This was crossed out, and replaced with the phrase that they would now be open to “students who can function in the national [Japanese] language (kokugo 国語)” (Chōsen Government General, November 21, 1922).

These advances suggested progress toward education equality while glossing over important limitations. First, while the GGK decreed an increase in school years, it allowed rural schools to continue with the four-year (and if necessary three-year) system if six years proved difficult. This two-year increase proposal also came at a time when in Japan education officials were debating a similar two-year increase, from six to eight years, in Japanese elementary education (Marshall 1994, 93–94). Regarding the Japanese schools opening their doors to Japanese-language competent Koreans, various sources, including GGK statistics, suggest that these schools limited to around ten percent (three students per class) the number of Korean students.

The deepening wartime situation of the 1930s encouraged Japanese attempts to redefine Korean education policy to better coordinate it with the assimilation spirit, isshi dōjin 一視同仁 (literally, universal benevolence), as articulated in the 1910 Imperial Rescript on Annexation. A major revision followed the escalation

6 Dong Wonmo (1969)’s dissertation on Japanese assimilation practices contains statistics useful for understanding the discrepancies between Japanese and Korean schools.
of Japan’s war in China from July 1937. This advancement coincided with the bold naisen ittai plan to erase lingering differences between the two peoples. In 1938, the year this program was launched, Korean men gained the opportunity of enlisting in the Japanese military as “volunteers” (shiganhei seido 志願兵制度). This program further encouraged the effort to unite the separate peninsula education schools under a single unified “national education” (kokumin kyōiku 国民教育) system. The stated purpose behind this effort was an often-heard promise: to “completely unify the road to the imperial state” (Kan ni tagarite kōkoku no michi ni kiitsu 完ニ互リテ皇国ノ道ニ帰一) between Koreans and Japanese. Erasing distinction between Korean and Japanese schools would, it was reasoned, eradicate distinction between the two peoples.

The plan, however, soon came to be criticized for lack of content. Funata Kyōji (船田享 1939, 246) wondered if the plan had any substance beyond simply attaching a new name to old systems to advance the rather challenging goal of providing both Koreans and Japanese an education that met homeland standards. Tanaka Kōzō 田中浩造 (1939) argued that this plan neglected issues of the past that separated the two systems since annexation. He added that the overall Korean curriculum would have to be amended to coincide with the nationalist studies emphasized in the Japanese curriculum. How would Koreans react to such a change in their studies?

Experimental schools also appeared in an effort to close this education gap. One such school, participating in a plan titled “imperial subjectification education” (kōkoku shinminka no kyōiku 皇国臣民化の教育), marked the first anniversary of its opening by offering a detailed report in the GGK monthly Chōsen 朝鮮 on how it promoted Japanese-Korean co-education (naisen kyōgaku 内鮮共学). The report, which packaged a collection of contributions, defined the aim of the four-year program that enrolled 203 students (126 Japanese; 77 Koreans) as follows:

To carry out the spirit of the Imperial Rescript on Education to train our loyal imperial subjects, the essence of this education is grounded on the basis of the emperor’s vitality which cannot be measured in words. This education’s true essence is to carry out the sacred words of isshin dōjin so our peninsular brethren can become true imperial subjects. To realize the boundaries of Japan-Korea, one body and a shared spirit under one roof (dōshin ikka 同心一家)." The points that defined the school’s purpose mirrored those found in other documents that emphasized “clarifying the concept of the national polity (kokutai 国体), developing a national conviction, and promoting a Japanese spirit” within the students. The school was dedicated to instilling within Korean students an “awareness that they were already Japanese (sude ni Nihonjin 既に日本人), rather than “naichijin 内地人 [or] Chōsenjin 朝鮮人 (Chōsen 1939, 20–21). Toward

Short reports on this school, and those of other schools that developed education programs in accordance with the GGK’s naisen ittai program, were bundled into a lengthy section titled “Waga kō no Kōkoku Shinmin Kyōiku” 我が校の皇国臣民教育 [Imperial subject education at our school] and published in the April 1939 issue of the GGK monthly Chōsen.
this end students received intensive instruction in national (Japanese) language (kokugo), the Japanese spirit (Nippon seishin 日本精神), and national (Japanese) history (kokushi 国史). Students also sat for “lectures on the circumstances of the times” (jikyoku kōwa 時局講話) to help them properly understand events unfolding in the war with China (Chōsen 1939, 18–19). Culture immersion was also a part of this shinminka 臣民化 education that included lessons on Japanese styles of dress (wafuku 和服) (Chōsen 1939, 5). Korean students did receive training in their traditional cuisine, but not in the Korean language. The school initially kept a Japanese-only rule that banned the Korean language both in and out of school, an unenforceable rule that was later scaled back to monitor just their on campus language use (Chōsen 1939, 33).

The school, which remained nameless, appeared determined to match the spirit of naisen ittai in its efforts to marry rhetoric and practice. The report did, however, leave several fundamental questions unanswered. First, its emphasis on creating “imperial women” (kōkoku josei 皇国女性) indicated that here “co-education” (kyōgakkō 共学) meant mixed Japanese-Korean rather than mixed-gender. The report was silent on the composition of the student body, how the students were selected (or recruited), and whether there were plans to increase the enrollment in the future. The school’s rather limited student body revealed its experimental status. Would the successes outlined in the report be exported to the peninsula’s mainstream education? Was the school prepared to extend its curriculum to the requisite six years, as stipulated in the 1922 Education Ordinance? Finally, did the report’s introduction of this shinmin kyōiku, dedicated to advancing student shinminka, reflect a retreat from the GGK pledge to upgrade peninsular education to homeland standards through the kokumin kyōiku 国民教育 it had just recently introduced?

Other Examples of Contradiction in Japanese Assimilation Policy

Contradictions similar to those above found in Japan’s education system appeared in other areas, some as mechanisms for social control and others as apparent manifestations of Japanese discriminatory attitude toward Koreans. The Japanese police’s obsession for maintaining Japanese-Korean distinction disrupted initiatives designed to promote the two peoples’ unity. In Japan they devised a “checklist” that included Korean peculiarities to meet this end. Items on this list included differences in Korean physique and features (e.g. how they combed their hair); language (their difficulty in pronouncing (ga, gi, gu, ge, go); etiquette and eating/drinking habits (behavior toward elders); and their mannerisms (how they carried things or washed their face) (Kan 2003, 63–65). In Korea police strongly objected to policy aimed at unifying Korean and Japanese name systems (sōshikaimei 创氏改名), a change designed (and on occasion used by Koreans [Kawashima 2009, 111]) to decrease Korean discrimination by Japanese. Police feared that its success would complicate their efforts at maintaining vigilance over these people. In the end a compromise was reached that effectively defeated the policy’s purpose: The Koreans would be encouraged to adopt “Japanese-style names” (Nihonjinfu no shimei 日本人風の氏名) in form, but with character combinations that easily identified
Thus, like the formation of the “national school” system, contradiction remained as the law's spirit of unification was being compromised by content that strengthened Japanese-Korean distinction.

Japanese also manipulated post-March First reforms that permitted the Korean language a greater presence in the colony as means toward its own control-centered ends. Just after the independence movement demonstrations discussion appeared advising that Koreans be provided with freedom of speech rights in order to better coordinate peninsula and archipelago legislation (Chūō kōron June 1919, 92–94). In 1920 the colonial administration reversed a policy that limited the Korean press to the GGK-sponsored Maeil sinbo (毎日申報 Daily reporter) to permit multiple indigenous newspapers, which ignited an active Korean-language print culture (Robinson 1984). These same reforms aimed to encourage Japanese participation, as well, by providing incentives to promote greater settler Korean-language proficiency (Yamada 2004). Governor General Saitō Makoto articulated the purpose behind these reforms as keeping “pace with the progress of the times and the intellectual and economic advancement made... by the Korean people” (Saitō 1920, 167). Yet, the GGK apparently also had issues of greater immediacy in mind, including the quelling of foreign criticism and the coopting of Korean nationalist activities, including a rather active underground press (Robinson 1988, 158).

Later in the decade the GGK would respond to criticism claiming that the Korean-based media sidetracked the administration's stated goal of assimilation (Chōsen Government General 1927) by arguing that the Korean language press was necessary as it provided the administration with a vehicle for communicating its views to the Korean people. Officials would also insist that the 1920 language amendments also amplified the Korean voice thus rendering the colonized more transparent and easier to control.8 Mizuno Rentarō 水野錬太郎 (1999), who served as Saitō Makoto’s vice governor general, articulated this advantage as follows:

Due to the articles and editorials that appeared in Korea’s vernacular newspapers, we were able to know the Korean people's trend of thought. [Previously] we were only able to transmit our opinions to the people. The GGK's organs and newspapers included only the administrative side thus limiting our access to the [Korean] voice. We thus could not govern them with justice. As for the Koreans, by allowing them the means to extend their voice through vernacular newspapers, we gained for the first time access to the voice of the commoner. It was as if we finally built a chimney for the kitchen stove. Because we did not have this chimney earlier the smoke from the stove had no escape route and simply smoldered and darkened the room. [The chimney provided this outlet and] made the room much brighter and [Korean] moods fresher. This is good. Without a chimney the logs do not burn properly and the fire dies out. It is safe to say that because we did not have this chimney erected in [1919] the demonstrations turned into a disastrous fire.

Similar to that of Korean names, the above discussion regarding Korean language

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8 For example, the Japanese police, who were charged with media censorship duties, regularly scored highest on the Korean proficiency tests administered by the GGK from this time (Yamada 2004, 86).
issues demonstrates the immediacy of social control assuming preference over the long-term goal of Korean assimilation, at least into the late 1930s when the GGK dramatically scaled back the Korean media and ended Korean language instruction in the schools.

Other policy decisions that contradicted Japanese assimilation can be explained through the discriminatory nature of peripheral expansion. This is evident in distinctions that the Japanese media drew to differentiate Koreans from Japanese, one of the more peculiar being the fairly consistent labeling of Japanese as *kokumin* (national subjects) and Koreans as *shinmin* (imperial subjects). It included Koreans as *kokumin* only when discussion involved both colonizer and colonized, as seen in the *kokumin kyoˉiku* system discussed above. The media often attached a *ka* 化 to the two terms indicating that the two levels of assimilation (*kokuminka* and *shinminka*) represented separate processes rather than a conjoined result. The contradiction in colonial rhetoric and practice here is in the media adopting different expressions that rather consistently depicted Koreans as engaged in a process independent of their Japanese counterparts, similar to that seen in French Senegal.

Similar examples of such discrimination appeared at times that presented the Japanese with golden opportunities to demonstrate their assimilation rhetoric to be more than simply empty words. One such opportunity appeared in an 1929 petition to extend to both peninsula-based Japanese and Koreans suffrage rights in accordance with Japan’s 1925 General Election Law that enfranchised all archipelago-based males, Japanese as well as Koreans, over the age of twenty-five.9 Koreans in Japan could even run for seats in Japan’s National Diet. Jeffrey Bayliss (2013, 249, 304–09), who shows that Japanese authorities even accepted ballots written in *han’gu˘l* 한글, counted 17 Koreans who stood for candidacy in national and local elections between 1931 and 1943, with several winning seats in these assemblies.

In February 1929 Representative Inoue Takame 井上孝哉 introduced a petition calling for Korean suffrage rights to the Japanese Diet on behalf of a Taki Kumejirō 多木久米二郎 of Hyōgo Prefecture (Taki 1929). The legislature responded by organizing a seventeen-member committee to deliberate its feasibility. Soon after it proposed the “System for Korean political participation” (*Chōsen ni okeru sansei ni kan suru seido* 朝鮮に於ける参政に関する制度). The proposal first advised granting Koreans up to five seats in the Diet’s upper house (*shuˉgiin* 衆議院), the House of Peers, a body that was appointed rather than elected. It further proposed the formation of a hundred-man regional assembly (*Chōsen chihō gikai* 朝鮮地方議会), comprised of a membership of two-thirds elected by the Korean people and the remainder appointed by the GGK. This assembly, which would not materialize for another decade, would deliberate such budgetary expenditures as allocations

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9 Ken C. Kawashima (2009, 166) notes several distinctions, one being that Koreans had to demonstrate a one-year residence, while the Japanese just six months. Relatively less stable residence records by the Koreans limited the number of qualified voters even after the requirement was reduced to six months.
for public welfare, education, occupation, and public works (Saitō 1929). The proposal, however, remained silent on Taki’s central aim of granting suffrage rights to peninsula residents. The Japanese government would finally include this right in an April 1945 bill that also gave Koreans twenty-three seats in the Diet’s Lower House. This legislation, scheduled to go into effect in 1946, resurrected the minimum (fifteen yen) tax requirement that the 1925 General Election Law had rescinded for Japanese two decades earlier. Like compulsory education, also slated to be introduced in 1946, Japan’s August 1945 defeat prevented the colonized from exercising this right (Fujitani 2011, 66).

**Criticism of Japanese Assimilation Contradictions**

Criticism of peripheral colonial duplicity, similar to that by Yi Sūngu introduced earlier in this paper, appeared in other similar colonial situations. Support for French assimilation by the Jeunes Algériens (Young Algerians) (Ruedy 1992, 129) and for Japanese assimilation by the Taiwanese Assimilation Association (dōhakai 同化会) (Lamley 1970–1971) both earned criticism by the respective colonial governments. Individual supporters also faced criticism. Jeunes Algériens leader Emir Khaled’s support earned him the reputation among the French as a “principal troublemaker” and forced exile. Postcolonial studies recognize him as Algeria’s first nationalist (Ruedy 1992, 129–31). The Vietnamese bourgeois party leader, Bui Quang Chieu, came to be regarded as a “thorn in the side of the colonial regime” for his support of French assimilation (Tai 1996, 45).

Colonizers also faced criticism for, in the name of assimilation, reaching out to the colonized. Two such Japanese, Tauchi Chizuko 田内千鶴子 and Osada Kanako 長田かな子, were rebuked by their family and friends after revealing their decision to marry Koreans (Takahashi 2002, 178). The colonizer settlers were among the most vocal in criticizing their country’s colonial policy. It was the French and European settlers—many of the latter having migrated to Algeria from Alsace and Lorraine after French defeat—who successfully lobbied against the post-World War I (Charles) Jonnart Laws that attempted to rescind the religious conversion requirement to promote greater Algerian assimilation (Ruedy 1992, 112).

Among Japanese, cautions regarding the feasibility of assimilation in Korea began to appear even before annexation. The peninsula-based Keijō Shinpō (京城新報 Seoul Times) warned its readers to expect more problems between Japanese and Korean residents unless amends were made. One July 1910 editorial remarked that the increase in Japanese and Korean contacts had led to increased discussions between the two. These discussions, which tended to center on their differences, often escalated into physical confrontations (sōtō 争鬪) (Keijō Shinpō, July 15, 1910). Three months later the newspaper addressed a more fundamental issue, perhaps to counter a groundless confidence that Japanese held regarding their ability to

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10 This paper draws documents from two collections of General Governor Saitō Makoto’s papers. The Saitō Makoto kankei monjo 斎藤実関係文書 (Saito Makoto related papers) is a microfilm collection located in the Kensei room of the Japan Diet Library (日本国会議事堂). From this collection a Korean publisher, Koryō sórim 高麗書林, published a seventeen-volume set of papers by the Japanese administrator.
assimilate Koreans. Total assimilation, the editorial warned, involved much more than simply instructing the colonized in the Japanese language. It also necessitated their acquiring the Japanese “national spirit,” specifically their appreciation for Shintoism. Realizing this goal, it cautioned, required much time and extreme patience (Keijō Shinpō, October 23, 1910).

The year leading up to the completion of the 1911 Education Ordinance elicited a diverse commentary on education policy, much of it positive in its advice for advancing assimilation, but some critical of the policy decision altogether. An essay by a Horio Ishimine 堀尾石峰 (1910, 13–15) directly attacked what he saw as a disturbing contradiction in Japanese assimilation rhetoric: advocates of this policy failed to consider policy content; they advanced the policy while maintaining a feeling of superiority over the Korean people. This disparaging attitude, he noted, mirrored that found in other colonial relationships, such as that of the British in India, and of white Americans towards blacks and Native Americans. How can the Japanese expect Koreans to advance in such a miserable situation? Mitsuchi Chužo 三土忠造, a Japanese Diet member, explained Korean backwardness as a temporary transitional phase, rather than as characteristic of the people’s permanent inferiority to Japanese. They could eventually succeed just as the Japanese did following the Meiji Restoration. Mitsuchi (1910, 23–26) advised against the education system aiming to create Japanese subjects. Rather, they should be trained as “world citizens.”

Commentary on assimilation policy both intensified and diversified following the March First Independence Movement. Some Japanese criticized their government’s sustained attempts to assimilate a people that did not wish to be assimilated. One longtime Japanese resident of Korea, Hosoi Hajime 細井肇, had his confidence in assimilation shattered as he witnessed Koreans taking to the streets in protest of Japanese rule. He now believed Japanese to be “naïve” for thinking they could succeed without completing necessary preparations. Should it introduce the “radical assimilation” (ikki ni dōka 一気に同化) that this policy required, it would, to the contrary, now either suffocate the people or drive them into desperate resistance against Japanese rule (Hosoi 1919, 24). He questioned: Could Japanese awaken to the broadmindedness and farsightedness that this policy required? Hosoi, who thought this improbable, advised that Japan reconsider its assimilation policy (Hosoi 1919, 27–28).

The media published experiences suggesting the high hurdles that prevented the Korean-Japanese relationship from advancing toward assimilation. One Korean, a certain Yi Yŏngsun 李永淳 (1937, 90–92), described the inferior treatment he received from Japanese he regarded as acquaintances, if not friends. After spending the night at his home they failed to even bid their farewells, much less repay the money Yi had lent them, before departure. Keijō Imperial University 京城帝国大学 professors admitted in a roundtable discussion that their Korean students had a difficult time finding employment after graduation; a medical school professor described patients who stated a preference for Japanese, rather than Korean, doctors (Bungei shunjū, June 1939). The greatest manifestations of the contradiction in rhetoric and practice were introduced in the heat of the long Asia Pacific War.
Korean labor conscription forced hundreds of thousands of Koreans to perform jobs that the Japanese considered to be beneath them, such as coal mining and, for women, “comfort” duties for the military.

Conclusions
In late December 1945 the United States occupation authorities in Japan issued a “special press release” that addressed the question of nationality status for Koreans who chose to remain in Japan: Would they retain their Japanese nationality? The answer, an emphatic no, concluded that since Japan’s defeat “Koreans have been liberated from any and all vestiges as subjects, citizens, or nationals of Japan” (Press Release 1945). This exchange reflects an impression often heard even today that with annexation Koreans gained Japanese citizenship/nationality, a status that liberation took from them. Connected to this is a second, primarily Korean claim that Japan, through its assimilation policy, aimed to obliterate the Korean culture and language. While Japan’s colonial rhetoric certainly supported such premonitions, this paper has argued that its practices often sent the colonial-colonized relationship drifting in an opposite direction.

The above arguments stem from an over-focus on colonial intentions as expressed through Japanese rhetoric, and insufficient attention to the purpose behind their policy. Similar to other examples of peripheral expansion the colonizers articulated their administrative purpose as directing a process to elevate the colonized to a position of acceptance as internal subjects. In Japan’s case the colonizers estimated that this process would take between three to five generations (fifty to one hundred years) before bearing fruit. However, they refrained from setting specific requirements that the colonized had to meet to claim legal status as Japanese. They did make allowances hinting that Koreans had attained Japanese status, such as providing travelers with Japanese passports and extending suffrage rights to Japan-based Korean males who qualified. These allowances having netted but a minority of Koreans encourages a reconsideration of the view that the people en masse had attained Japanese nationality. Advances encouraged under naisen ittai suggest concerted efforts being advanced to close the rhetoric-policy contradiction. Whether these advances, which included promises of suffrage rights and compulsory education from 1946, would have sufficiently advanced Koreans to Japanese subjecthood remains an open question that defies a definite answer.

Even if Koreans gained legal Japanese status, would it have led to colonizer social recognition of Koreans as their fellow subjects? Efforts, particularly by the colonial police, that aggressively sought to protect colonizer-colonized difference suggest that difficulties would have prevailed. The Japanese media also contributed to the stubborn resilience of these distinctions. Unlike other internally colonized subjects, it referred to Koreans as “Chōsenjin” 朝鮮人 or the abbreviated “senjin” 鮮人 rather than include them as “Nihonjin” (日本人 Japanese). As mentioned above,

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11 Regarding passports, given that Japanese wished for overseas authorities to recognize the travelers as Japanese charges it makes sense that Koreans were issued Japanese passports. Whether the documents in any way revealed to Japanese the holder’s Korean identity is worthy of consideration.
it maintained the distinction of Koreans becoming imperial subjects (shinninka), portraying them as different from the Japanese who were becoming national subjects (kokuminka). As with the legal process, over time the Japanese-Korean relationship might have developed a social understanding to permit the colonized to seamlessly blend into Japanese society. However, one only has to consider the difficulties that peoples annexed at this peripheral level continue to encounter, namely the Ainu and the Okinawan, to envision the fate Koreans might have faced had Japan's colonial rule on the peninsula survived the Pacific War.

Japanese predicted even before annexation that their country would experience difficulties in realizing assimilation's goals. Others offered that Japanese as a people were ill fit to assimilate foreign peoples. These warnings proved correct as Japan's policy failed to deliver the promises made by its rhetoric. Yet, this inconsistency proved rather consistent across examples of peripheral expansion. Situated between two extreme types that on the one hand delivered an intensive assimilation policy aimed at nation-formation and the other a hands-off approach that protected colonizer-colonized distinctions, peripheral expansion conveniently borrowed from both in preaching a mission of unity but adopting practices that divided. Assimilation's reach extended into the post-liberation period as disputes erupted between Koreans who had bought into the rhetoric and those who had resisted Japanese rule. In southern Korea the former being retained in positions of power as police and bureaucrats led to an instability that carried through to the Korean War.

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