

## **Contradictions in Korean Colonial Education**

*Leighanne Yuh\**

### **Introduction**

A survey of the textbooks the Japanese Government General commissioned for use in schools in colonial Korea (1910-1945) illuminates a basic contradiction in Japanese colonial policy. On the one hand, the texts exhibit a progressive assimilationist impulse to incorporate Koreans into the Japanese empire, and to inculcate modern ways and sensibilities for administrative efficiency. On the other hand, textbook lessons exhibit a more subtle theme of differentiation, of implicit subordination of Korean subjects to Westernized Japanese overlords. This theme of hierarchical or calibrated assimilation was especially important given the close ethnic and historical ties between Japan and Korea—it would be easy for a Korean subject to pass as a Japanese colonizer, and so it was imperative that the lesson of assimilation be bounded to discourage and disable the possibility.<sup>1</sup>

As a general and practical matter, assimilation was necessary for efficient administration—imperial subjects needed a working knowledge of the Japanese language in order to understand and obey the orders necessary to operate a modern empire. The Government-General also attempted to create a sense of similarity and belonging—either directly through compulsory education, or indirectly through an intricate system

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\* Assistant Professor, Department of Korean History, Korea University

of ranks and rewards—to foster loyalty to the empire. Simultaneously, though, the Japanese did not desire full assimilation where Koreans could become Japanese; the end goal, rather, was moderated assimilation. This was because the Japanese needed to differentiate themselves from their predominantly Asian imperial subjects to maintain the colonial hierarchy and to preserve “Japanese” (and thus, superior) identity. This was especially true with respect to Koreans, who, of all Asians, could claim the closest ethnic and historical ties with the Japanese, and many of whom felt culturally superior to their imperialist neighbors. It is from this inherent tension and contradiction in Japanese colonial policy that the discourse of empire and the formation of assimilation policies emerged in Korea.

The European example had shown that global empires could be multi-lingual and multi-ethnic organisms, whether through the absorption of colonies into existing nation-states, or by acquisitive extension through colonies. The British and the French, in particular, provided successful models for Japan. Japan’s colonies, including Okinawa, Taiwan, Korea, and Micronesia, illustrated a pattern of the incorporation of smaller ethnic groups into the nation-state as well as the acquisition of overseas colonies by the larger empire. However, the distinction between these two patterns was not always clear and proved to be particularly problematic in terms of formulating assimilation policies.

Japanese colonial officials attributed much of the success of assimilation in its “model colony” Taiwan to the establishment and development of civil institutions. Education played an important role in enlisting the docile cooperation and support of the Taiwanese; the Japanese hoped to accomplish the same in Korea.<sup>2</sup> Japanese officials began to set up “modern” educational facilities even before the official annexation of Korea; and throughout the period until 1945, education continued to function as an agency of change and control.

However, the extent to which Japanese colonial education in Korea operated as a means of social control and reproduced the dominant ideological systems is as yet an area requiring further exploration. The

primary purpose of this paper is to examine both the ideological and sociological function of colonial education and its implications in identity formation in the colony and to some extent in the metropole. That is, through education, the Japanese attempted to create docile bodies and docile minds in a colony considered to be simultaneously separate from and integral to “the interior.”

### **Previous Scholarship**

In the past, some Korean nationalist scholarship has claimed that the purpose of Japanese colonialism was to obliterate Korean identity and culture, and to “Japanize” the people of the peninsula, creating loyal imperial subjects. These scholars point to the burning of all books on Korean history and Korean illustrious figures popular before annexation, and the adoption of Japanese as the national language in Korean schools as evidence of Japanese intentions for complete assimilation. Recent Korean scholarship and research by Michael Robinson and Henry Em, among others, suggest in contrast that the Japanese were more interested in constructing a distinct identity for Koreans as a subaltern ethnic group within a multi-ethnic empire. My examination of colonial morals textbooks provides much corroborating evidence for this argument, and shows concrete ways in which such an identity was constructed, only to run into unanticipated self-contradiction.

The apologists of the Japanese empire, on the other hand, argue that colonial education modernized the antiquated Confucian school system in Korea and provided its subjects with a practical and enlightened education. They stress the marked growth and expansion of this educational system, and the enthusiasm with which Koreans embraced the new rationalistic and scientific learning. They also point to the inadequacy of the *sôdang* (Confucian school) in providing any kind of usable knowledge. Because of the stress on memorization of Chinese characters and outdated Chinese literature in the *sôdang*, the ultimate

implication is that Koreans were unable to modernize and avert foreign threats. Only through Japanese modern education would Koreans finally be capable of economic and cultural development.

Theoretically, the rigid dichotomy between “good” and “evil” aspects of modern education has received criticism in recent years. Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punishment* examines the mechanics of power and its effects on the individual. For Foucault, the classroom is a site where power relations exercise themselves, and where discipline functions to regulate physical and mental activity. The organization and spatial distribution of the classroom itself allows the teacher to constantly supervise all of the students with a simple glance. The students’ recognition that they fall under this disciplinary gaze affects their behavior and serves as part of the process of what Foucault terms normalization. He also describes the exercise of power through the act of punishing, and its ability to separate, analyze, and differentiate, resulting in the creation of individuals. Through an analysis of the colonial educational system, it is possible to examine the force of both discipline and punishment on the construction of Korean colonial identity and the Japanese empire as a whole. Considering the historical and social conditions of the peninsula, one of the main priorities for the Japanese was maintaining control of the people without being entirely repressive. Education was the means to accomplish such a goal, while it also served the needs of the empire in establishing a hierarchy and social order among its subjects.

In *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, the French scholar Pierre Bourdieu likewise critically analyzes the educational system and its ideological function in cultural reproduction. Following Durkheim, he believes that the essential function of every educational system is to conserve a culture and the social order, resulting in the reproduction of class relations and the perpetuation of a pedagogic conservatism within that system. Therefore, by entrusting education with the hereditary transmission of cultural capital, it also legitimates the transmission of power from one generation to another. Similarly, through colonial

education, Japanese officials both conserved and created Japanese and Korean culture in order to solidify distinctions between the colonizer and the colonized. Education played a central role in forming the identity of imperial subjects and is related to the “interpellation of subjects,” which Louis Althusser describes.

Post-colonial scholarship also offers new insights on identity formation and the production and consumption of colonial education. Ann Stoler in *Race and the Education of Desire* inserts the discourse of race and sexuality into the construction of nineteenth-century European identity. She argues that a bourgeois identity was constructed vis-à-vis Europe’s colonies and tied to notions of being “European” and being “white.”<sup>3</sup> In the case of Japan and its colonies, the creation of a Korean colonial subject had immediate implications and redounded back to Japan, serving to secure and differentiate “real” Japanese subjects. I would argue that the discourse of empire that emerged, and that is particularly evident through education, determined not only eligibility for citizenship, but the limitations and expectations on one’s participation in the community.

### **Historical Context**

The “modern myth” (Carol Gluck) of the Japanese nation emphasized the uniqueness of the people inhabiting the main islands of Japan as an ethnic nation. Inspired by the German idea of the *Volk*, Japan’s governing elites infused this notion with imperial mythology and the mythic origins of the Japanese race. Existing from time immemorial, the Japanese depicted themselves as a distinctive and superior racial entity, and as the new leaders of Asia. As a result, while the Japanese incorporated such peripheral “outcast” groups as the Ainu and the Okinawans and depicted them as co-equal imperial subjects, they also pursued policies and practices of discrimination against them.

These contradictions were even more evident in the case of Korea. Japanese imperial ideologues justified the annexation of Korea on the

basis of a paternalistic attitude attributing the backwardness of the Koreans to its discrete historical circumstances, and framed this in terms of common racial and cultural origins, as the 1910's slogans "same ancestry, same roots" (K. tongjo tonggûn, J. dōsō dōkon) and "same script, same race" (J. dōbun dōshu) illustrate. During the 1920's, rhetoric emphasizing the shared racial origins recedes - perhaps due in part to Korean resistance vis-à-vis the March First Movement and in part to the liberalization of Japanese politics during the years of "Taisho democracy." However an emphasis on shared ancestry reemerges in the late 1930's engendering the doctrine of common ancestors (J. Nissen dōsōron, K. Ilsôn tongjoron) and slogans such as "Japan and Korea as one body" (J. Naisen ittai, K. Naesôn ilch'e).

Like their French and other Euro-American counterparts, Japanese officials pursued policies of guidance and "enlightened" administration in order to "civilize" and "modernize" the colonial peoples. The distinguishing feature of Japanese colonial rule was that the Japanese and its colonial subjects shared a similar culture and origins. Theoretically, these similarities could facilitate a more complete integration and assimilation of colonizers and colonized.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, though, what assimilation meant to the Japanese varied throughout the period and among different groups. Peter Duus in *The Abacus and the Sword* outlines this debate over colonial policy in Japan and reveals that dissent persisted until the war period. Covering the entire gamut, some argued for a system that ignored and erased all differences, and that viewed the colony as an extension of the mainland, emphasizing equality. Others believed that the colonized peoples found themselves in their present positions because of their biological inferiority and were thereby a separate and distinct race and undeserving of the same rights as the Japanese. The pace at which assimilation was to occur also changed from gradual to accelerated throughout the period. The more liberal interpretation of assimilation never really gained in popularity among Japanese officials, for race continued to act as an obstacle to the conceptualization of full assimilation.

In the wake of the March First Movement in 1919, an eruption of Korean nationalism and assertion of independence forced Japanese authorities to re-strategize colonial policies. In the 1920's, the period of "cultural policy," the Government-General officials compiled morals textbooks to help create loyal subjects of the Emperor, to ensure obedience among the Koreans, and to consolidate its own control. Morals training (*shūshin*) in Japan had occupied a central place in the education and transformation of Japanese society and played a similar role in Korea. However, the morals textbooks compiled and used in Korea differed in important ways from their use and content in Japan. Some lessons were directly lifted from the state authorized textbooks used in Japan proper, while others specifically addressed Korean issues. The tension between the universalistic demands of empire and the particularizing needs of Japanese nationalism was played out in these textbooks. The result was a curriculum openly stressing the co-equality of all subjects of the Emperor but subtly reinforcing the subordinate status of Koreans as a distinct and subaltern ethnic group. Although Japanese colonial policy changed periodically, these reflect only variations in administration, whereas fundamental objectives remained the same throughout the period, that is, to construct a distinct and inferior Korean identity within the larger construct of identity as co-equal subjects of the Emperor. This article does not address the impact on pre-existing norms of Korean identity, nor Korean nationalist endeavors regarding the preservation or reconstruction of Korean culture, but examines the mechanics of Japanese morals education and its effects on the creation (or erasure) of Korean culture and identity.

Assimilation as a concept continued to elude colonial authorities and was never defined in specific terms. It is evident and logical that the Japanese would view assimilation desirable at a certain level. Beyond this, though, it would be necessary to maintain and create certain distinctions in order to justify colonial presence and authority. It is from this perspective that we are able to discern at which juncture the policy of assimilation was abandoned and an alternate identity formation became

operational. The textbooks and their corresponding teacher's supplements reveal the incorporation of Korean customs and language into the curricula. In the texts, local Korean customs are frequently enlisted as instruments in creating these new schemata of identity relations. It is through this medium that colonial officials were able to place themselves at the top of the hierarchy and the Koreans below in an inoffensive manner, and to inculcate the ideology of the empire.

### **Institutional Background**

The Japanese began as early as 1905 in their reform of the educational system in Korea. Under the auspices of the Residency General, ordinances and regulations for the establishment of common schools, normal schools, higher schools, and industrial schools were issued; and within four years, the number of public common schools had grown to ninety-two.<sup>5</sup> According to records kept by the Government-General in Chosen, these early reforms led to the renovation and expansion of existing schools, and the establishment of other schools.

After annexation, colonial officials prepared a new educational system and in 1911 promulgated the Chosen Educational Ordinance. Articles one through seven of the ordinance stipulate the general purpose for education in the colony:<sup>6</sup>

*Article I.* Education for Koreans in Chosen shall be given in accordance with this ordinance.

*Article II.* The essential principle of education in Chosen shall be the making of loyal and good subjects by giving instruction on the basis of the Imperial Rescript concerning education.

*Article III.* Education in Chosen shall be adapted to the needs of the times and the condition of the people.

*Article IV.* Education in Chosen is roughly classified into three kinds, i.e. common, industrial, and special education.

*Article V.* Common education shall aim at imparting common knowledge and art, special attention being paid to the engendering of national characteristics and the spread of the national language.

*Article VI.* Industrial education shall aim at imparting knowledge and art concerning agriculture, commerce, technical industry, and so forth.

*Article VII.* Special education shall aim at imparting knowledge and art of higher branches of science and art.

Scholars have noted that Koreans did not respond favorably to the above ordinance and some even boycotted the Japanese school system, sending their children elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> Much of their resentment stemmed from the provision that the school system be separate from the Japanese in Korea. The ordinance also set as its chief goal of education the making of loyal imperial citizens, and presumed that adaptations were necessary in order to accommodate the backward conditions and mentality of the people. Both patronizing and insulting, objection to the ordinance prompted its revision in 1916.

Public common education for Korean children was financed in several ways. Prior to 1920, the funds came from the Imperial Donation fund, provincial revenue, tuition, donation, state subsidies, and local revenues. After 1920, the Imperial Donation fund and revenue from the properties of old local schools were no longer used and instead the local supplementary “school” tax provided over half of the expenditure.<sup>8</sup> The heavy reliance on taxes and tuition to fund common education suggests that Koreans were paying for the bulk of their children’s education themselves.

<Table 1> provides the number of schools and the student enrollment in primary schools for Koreans. Although the figures indicate a

significant increase in the expansion of schools and the number of students enrolled, in the 1920's the rate of school attendance among Korean children age 7 to 14 peaked at only 9.9%. This means that while development in the educational system did occur, still only 10% of all Korean children attended school. In addition, the rural elementary school system was not introduced until the 1930's by the Ugaki administration.<sup>9</sup> We can assume then that most of the expansion in the school system and most of the children attending schools lived in urban areas. Clearly, these children whose parents could afford to send them to school belonged to the upper class. I will return later to the Japanese concern with class and its significance in the formation of colonial identity.

<Table 1> Number of Primary Schools for Koreans, Student Enrollment, and Rate of Attendance Among Children Age 7 to 14

| Year | Number of Schools | Student Enrollment | Rate of Attendance | Percent in Private Schools |
|------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1910 | 173               | 20,562             | ?                  | 44.7                       |
| 1915 | 429               | 67,556             | ?                  | 2.1                        |
| 1919 | 517               | 89,288             | ?                  |                            |
| 1920 |                   |                    | 4.6                | 5.1                        |
| 1925 | 1,322             | 385,415            | 9.9                | 4.4                        |

Sources: Figures for 1919 are from Ono Kenichi, *Chosen Kyoiku Mondai Kanken* (Collected Documents on the Problems of Korean Education) (Seoul: Chosen Kyoiku Kai, 1936), p. 68. Figures for all other years except the rate of school attendance: *Tokei Nempo*, 1910-1942. Figures for the rate of school attendance among the Korean children are based on *Census*, 1925. The rate for 1920 is from Ono, *ibid.*

## Identity Formation: Assimilation and Discrimination in Praxis

In 1910, the Japanese wrestled with the question of the nation and national identity for its subjects (*kokumin*). In the textbooks themselves, the Japanese did not speak of Korea as a colony, but described the events of 1910 as an “annexation.” In describing the history leading up to annexation, they depict a natural sequence of events culminating in the inevitable. Unable to govern itself and threatening the peace of East

Asia, Korea looked to the inland (*naichi*) and determined that a conjoining with Japan would be the wisest decision. The language that is used - 'annexation,' 'amalgamation,' 'joining,' 'union'<sup>10</sup> - connotes a combination or consolidation taking place. While the less diplomatic term 'colonization' denotes an unequal relationship between the metropole and the colony, this term is never used in the textbooks. Instead, the texts emphasize the incorporation of Korea into Japan and the opportunity for all members of the Japanese community to enjoy the benefits of Japanese rule. <Figure 1> illustrates the theme of Japanese and Koreans living together harmoniously, as co-equal subjects of the emperor. Entitled "Kindness," the lesson in <Figure 1> is from the first grade and depicts a Korean child giving directions to a Japanese man. (We can assume their race by their style of clothing.) Throughout the texts, several illustrations depict both Japanese and Koreans living and working together, continuing the theme of co-prosperity among all imperial subjects.

<Figure 1>



Korea as an integral part of Japan makes the tension between assimilation and distinction much greater and more contradictory. While it was

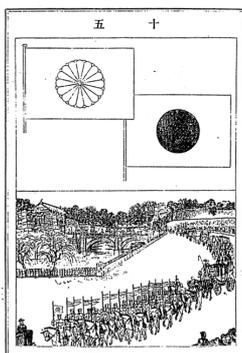
necessary for Koreans to imagine themselves as part of the larger Japanese community, it was impossible for them to participate as substantive members in the political life of the empire. On the other hand, it is important to recognize that the Japanese found it necessary to find some means to elicit the cooperation of Koreans to facilitate control of the peninsula. Morals education was one way in which the colonial authorities tried to accomplish this while eliding the issue of political participation and privileges. In light of the March First Movement, the baleful situation further challenged governing officials both in Korea and in Japan in terms of how to deal with the assimilation problem. The next phase of the colonial period, the 1920's, marked alacrity on the part of the Government-General to 'relax' colonial policies. In order for the Japanese empire to function as a whole, it was vital for its subjects to have a vested interest of sorts. However, membership did not signify equality. In fact, a rigid hierarchy existed within the empire with the Japanese naturally at the apex. Although Koreans lived in their own land, they were secondary citizens - they received second-rate education, jobs, and salaries, with little and sometimes no political rights. In short, they were to "think like Japanese, but not think they were Japanese."<sup>11</sup>

The colonial legal system is a prime example of the double standard that existed in Korea. The difference in culture and the low level of civilization in the peninsula justified the establishment of a separate legal system and the decision not to extend Japanese laws to the colony. The Governor-General directly reported to the emperor and colonial legislation was not required to pass through the Diet. This allowed for a great amount of freedom on the part of colonial officials and resulted in the issuance of several ordinances and laws specific to Korea. Issued in 1912, the Flogging Ordinance provided that corporal punishment could substitute for carceral punishment, but only for native (Korean) offenders. While flogging was a means of punishment in Japan and Korea, it was extirpated in Japan in 1882. Despite its unacceptability in Japan, the Government-General decided to preserve the practice of flogging in the colony since it was "an old Korean custom."<sup>12</sup>

## Assimilated Colonial Subjects

Throughout the textbooks, all subjects of the empire are referred to as *kokumin* or *sinmin*. Regardless of one's gender, sex, age, and even race, everyone theoretically was a Japanese subject and all other characteristics, were presumably less important. Beginning with the first grade, children were to learn about the emperor and the advantages of living under his beneficence. The fact that students are able to live peacefully and attend school is attributed to the emperor. The emperor, a divine being, loves all of his subjects as if they are his own children, therefore children are encouraged to be thankful for everything the emperor does, and to pay him the utmost respect. <Figure 2> is again from the first grade and the objective of this lesson is to teach that the Emperor is the person who should be the most respected personage. Teachers are admonished to be careful of their speech and attitude when discussing the emperor. In this illustration, one cannot actually see the emperor, but the pageantry surrounding his carriage exemplifies his power and majesty.<sup>13</sup> The depiction of the imperial flag above and partially over the Japanese flag may also suggest an emphasis on considering oneself an imperial rather than Korean subject.

<Figure 2>



The benefits of being an imperial subject, though, do not come without a price. While students owe respect to the emperor, there are also duties and obligations associated with being an imperial subject. A dutiful subject must practice a series of designated public virtues: be obedient and follow the rules, cooperate with others, be friendly and helpful, work diligently and work for the public good, to name only a few. Students are told that since such public institutions as schools, roads, and water works provide services for everyone, and inculcated on the importance of paying taxes and working for the public good in order to maintain them. (See <figure 3>) The lesson in <Figure 4> is entitled “Obey the Rules” and in this lesson students are taught to follow the rules at school and the laws of the land. <Figure 5> is from a sixth grade lesson and describes the proclamation of the constitution in Japan. Again, it is difficult to see the emperor himself, but the ceremonial pomp is impressive, displaying both the emperor’s power and wealth. Men are dressed in modern style military uniforms, and the ceremony is taking place in a modern-looking (Western?) ballroom with grandiose chandeliers. The implication is that the Japanese provide law and order, the basic structure of a nation-state, for the benefit of all the people and the security of Korea. Without these laws, and especially if the people do not treat these laws as important, not only will the country suffer, but the safety of the people will be in jeopardy.

&lt;Figure 3&gt;



&lt;Figure 4&gt;



&lt;Figure 5&gt;



The use of the emperor in these lessons accomplishes several objectives on the part of the colonial authorities. First, by subsuming the identity and needs of the individual to a collective identity, Japanese officials could more easily consolidate their control. If Korean subjects put their loyalties to the empire first and to Korea last, a recurrence of the March First Movement would no longer be a viable concern. Second, the emperor is presented as a benevolent father figure but also as a disciplinarian. While the emperor-as-father was concerned with and looked after his subjects, that relationship was contingent upon the loyalty and obedience of the subject. If the subject did not respond in the appropriate manner, he/she would suffer the consequences determined by the emperor-as-disciplinarian. Third, the ostentatious display of the emperor's strength and wealth impressed upon the minds of the Koreans was none like they had ever seen before. The Japanese emperor appeared to be far more superior and powerful than any of their own Korean monarchs from the past. The Koreans were led to believe that the rule of the Japanese emperor would bring peace and security to the peninsula, and that they too could receive the benefits of modern-day conveniences and luxuries.

### **Discriminated Colonial Subjects**

Although Koreans were taught the duties of an obedient subject, they did not learn of the privileges and opportunities offered to Japanese subjects. Through study and hard work, Japanese students had the option to continue on to higher education with the prospect of securing prestigious and responsible occupations. However, it was not the intent of Japanese officials for Koreans to do the same. Only Japanese held positions of real authority and power, while Koreans received vocational training for practical uses, or more often, manual labor. The illustrations accompanying the textbooks often depict Koreans in subservient positions, performing menial tasks of labor (<Figures 6 and 7>) while depicting the

Japanese in positions of authority or of exemplary moral character. <Figures 8, 9, and 4> depict school teachers and a policeman who are presumably Japanese. I make this assumption on the basis of their clothing. In the past, school teachers in Korea did not wear Western-style suits and “policemen” did not exist. It is quite possible that the figures represented are Korean or Koreans passing as Japanese. This is because we know that the Government-General employed many Korean schoolteachers and policeman; but the point is that regardless of their ethnicity, all authority is derived from the empire.

<Figure 6>



<Figure 7>



<Figure 8>



<Figure 9>



We also must recognize that the Japanese did allow some members of the Korean elite to go on to pursue secondary education in Japan or at Keijo University. However, these individuals were a select few. In 1925 there were 214 Korean students attending schools of higher learning in Japan, and 13.8% of all students in Japan were Korean. In 1926 there were only forty-seven Korean students enrolled at Keijo Imperial University and who comprised 31.3% of the entire student body. In the vocational schools in 1925, there were 4,782 Korean students who comprised 66.6% of the student body.<sup>14</sup> From these figures, it is clear that the main purpose of colonial education was to create a docile labor force in Korea. The textbooks also stress that all work should be done for the glory of the country and that virtue in any job can be found if done whole-heartedly. Thus Koreans are continually admonished to work, despite the lack of glory and compensation.

The textbooks exhort the cultivation of “traditional” virtues - filial piety, frugality, honesty, reverence for authority—presumably shared among “Sinic” cultures under the influence of Confucianism. The Japanese portray these values as universal values, pertinent to all subjects, assuming that no Korean parent would object to them. Respect for your elders, appreciating the beneficence of your parents, getting along with your siblings, and other moral dicta were reinforced as “traditional” Korean family values. (<Figures 11 and 12>) When appropriate, the texts also incorporate Korean language and customs to substantiate their objectives. In <Figure 10>, from a second grade lesson, the picture illustrates a traditional Korean family paying respects by performing ancestor worship at the grave. The lesson explains that because we receive everything from our parents and ancestors, we are morally indebted to them. Teachers are told to bear in mind local customs and regional differences. What is striking is that the portrayal is quintessentially Korean and Confucian, and shows a sophisticated understanding of Korea, as well as a sensitivity to local customs.

&lt;Figure 10&gt;



&lt;Figure 11&gt;



&lt;Figure 12&gt;



Nonetheless, the texts do not fail to indicate the backward nature of Korean superstitions and provide the contrast with modern Japanese (or Western) medicine. In <figure 13>, the lesson is entitled “Do not believe in superstitions.” It speaks about a woman who became sick and who went to a shaman for help. The shaman gave her some ‘special’ water, but it only made her sickness worse. Seeing this, someone in the village told the woman to go to a doctor; and after going she became cured. The doctor appears to be Japanese since he is dressed in Western-style clothing, and practicing Western-style medicine. In contrast, the women are dressed in traditional Korean clothing. The use of culture and customs in these texts make a poignant point - that Japan epitomized modernity, while Korea symbolized all that was decrepit and stagnant. For all that modernity offered (progress, development, prosperity), Korea had to look to Japan since it was unable to modernize on its own. On these grounds, the Japanese were able to justify the “annexation” (for Korea’s own good) and took the task of civilizing the Koreans upon themselves. However, the insidious paradox raises its ugly head once more: although the Japanese criticized Koreans for their “backwardness” and claimed they were indeed benefiting them by modernizing the colony, the result was Koreans functioning in a modern setting without modern privileges. Denied the rights of a modern citizenry and control of their future,

Koreans were confined to an inferior domain.

<Figure 13>



The idea of progress is often applied to the area of civility, mores, and cultural conventions, particularly when antiquity or traditional customs are considered primitive and barbaric. Similarly, both missionaries and Japanese alike viewed the tenacity of ancestor worship and shamanism in Korea as an indication of Korea's backwardness. Yet at the same time, Koreans were encouraged to perform such rituals as a display of respect for one's elders. Reminiscent of the Japanese campaigns to improve daily life, lessons in the morals textbooks stress cleanliness, personal hygiene, health and sanitation, saving, orderliness, etc. This attention to the quotidian and mundane reflected not only what Koreans were not and should be, but what they could become - a civilized and moral member of the community.

In terms of class issues, while colonial education mainly targeted children of the upper class, it did not prepare them for an upper class lifestyle. On the contrary, students were trained for lower level jobs and received very few, if any, technical skills. Education provided a basic indoctrination in imperial ideology and students were discouraged from pursuing anything beyond that. Koreans portrayed in the texts perform

manual labor or work in the service industry—occupations that most upper class Korean families would not have found acceptable for their children. Historically, education in Korea led to government service, prestige, and wealth. Colonial education did not necessarily guarantee upward social mobility or the maintenance of their social position.

Occasionally, when Korean students were allowed to pursue higher education, the cost to the family in sending them to either Keijo University or to Japan would have been prohibitive. Only a select few of the select few possessed the means to go all the way. Later, these people might have been able to secure solid occupations, even working for the Government-General and working alongside the Japanese. However, their Japanese counterparts were always given more responsibilities and more authority. Despite one's education, Japanese still considered Koreans inferior to themselves and expected them to be content with this subordinate status.

Through colonial education, Japanese officials tried to construct an image of the metropole as modern, civilized, and enlightened; in other words, everything Korea was not. But even with Japan's partial success in developing Korea and the similarities between the two countries, they argued that due to historical circumstances and the innate nature of the people, Korea would remain a step behind its colonizer. Being an imperial subject in Korea denoted an entirely new meaning - a meaning filled with tension and contradiction.

Even during the war years, when assimilation policies became the most aggressive under such slogans as *naisen ittai*, the tension between assimilation and discrimination persisted. Koreans were forced to change their surnames to Japanese names under the name order, yet their identification cards still indicated that they were *chosenjin*. The accelerated assimilation effort at the beginning of the war, or *kominka* movement, attempted to mobilize the Koreans and to supposedly transform them into imperial subjects, but never intended to extend full constitutional privileges.<sup>15</sup> The Japanese were not interested in destroying Korean identity, nor were they intent on fully assimilating or transforming

them into Japanese. Instead, the Japanese pursued a policy of discrimination in order to construct a subaltern Korean identity within their limited policies of assimilation designed to create loyal and obedient imperial subjects.

### **The Mechanics of Power**

Through 1920's colonial education, Japanese officials not only presented a construction of what they perceived as 'Korean,' but also claimed authority in the production of knowledge. The compilers of school textbooks determine what is learned, when it is learned, and how it is learned and therefore are able to carefully monitor the students' digestion of material. For Bourdieu, the production and reproduction of knowledge is an act of violence. He explains that the claim to authority over knowledge production is in itself an arbitrary act by an arbitrary power. This arbitrary power then imposes an arbitrarily determined body of knowledge upon the dominated group or class. I will not delve into a detailed discussion of the theories of Bourdieu here, but it is relevant to consider this notion of symbolic violence and the arbitrary nature of the educational process.

Even a quick glance at the table of contents of each textbook shows that the education Koreans received emphasized specific themes and did not encourage the arousal of 'unreasonable' expectations. Students are told that hard work leads to personal advancement, but the type of advancement that is described is revealing. Lesson 15 from the third grade tells the story of a boy named Kang Hosôn who came from an impoverished family and experienced many hardships. For ten years he worked from sunrise to sunset, depriving himself of any rest, until he eventually became one of the wealthiest men in the county. The next lesson continues to explain that Kang used his material wealth to help those who were less fortunate and to develop various public works. It is interesting to note that Kang did not accumulate his wealth by going to a

higher school or university, or securing a government job; but he was able to become rich without any formal education at all, through hard physical labor, never becoming lazy, and never indulging himself. Students were encouraged to emulate this example and throughout the texts are never urged to pursue higher education. Instead, all Koreans depicted in the textbooks are 'blue-collar' workers; and the content of the material seeks to mold behavior rather than cultivate creative minds.

The teacher's supplements expose the colonial methods of pedagogy and its aim for inculcation. Following each lesson lecture, the teacher is to ask the given discussion questions. All of the questions require a simple regurgitation of the material and no contemplation or critical analysis on the part of the student. Each lesson only attempts to deliver one message, and through the use of question and answer that message is driven into the minds of the students repeatedly. In addition, in the progression from grade to grade, the language of the material (in Japanese) becomes increasingly difficult and the lessons longer, but the subject matter in essence stays the same. Therefore, after the course of six years of training, the student would have become quite proficient in Japanese, well-versed in the imperial rhetoric, and deficient in terms of theoretical and critical thinking, and creativity.

Colonial officials and schoolteachers often encouraged Korean students to attend vocational schools. By 1942, there were 24,170 Korean students enrolled in government and public vocational schools. However, they were also encouraged to focus on the study of agriculture. In 1925, there were twenty-two agricultural schools, sixteen schools of commerce, only one school of engineering, and four schools of fishery. Ten years later the number of schools of commerce and engineering had remained the same, there were only three schools of fishery, and thirty schools of agriculture.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, higher education for Koreans meant more proficient laborers from the empire.

Knowledge production also determined what students learned about themselves as Koreans and about the Japanese. The history they learned through the colonial education system portrayed Koreans as backward

and derivative of Chinese culture. It pointed to the tributary system and Korea's subservient position as evidence of Korea's historical lack of independence and inability to govern itself. On the other hand, the uniqueness of Japan and its ability to synthesize the best of East and West clearly marks it as a leader to which Koreans must play a subservient role. Colonial officials preserved or highlighted certain Korean customs and these were to become the essence of Koreanness. Shamanism, ancestor worship, traditional clothing - all of these helped define what it meant to be Korean. In contrast, Western clothing, modern medicine, railroads, telephones were equated with what was Japanese. To become Japanese became very desirable; but while the Japanese claimed this was possible, in reality the Koreans would always be Korean.

Education was one means for Japanese officials to supervise and regulate their colonial subjects. Not only did they monitor their intake of knowledge, but they could monitor their physical behavior. Pictures of classrooms show students sitting upright, facing the front of the classroom, eyes fixed on the teacher. The lessons in the textbooks admonish children to be neat, punctual, and clean, and on a higher level to be frugal, diligent, sincere, kind, filial, and responsible. Children were given prizes and recognized for their achievement (for perfect attendance) and teachers are told to praise children for their exemplary behavior. These tactics continued through the war years and applied to children and adults alike. Among programs promoting the Japanese language, one recognized "National Language Families" where the family received "a tablet bearing the inscription "*kokugo no ie*, or "*kokugo katei*," in a special ceremony, to be hung by the front door of its residence as a symbol of honor."<sup>17</sup>

The punishment/reward system is effective because it creates boundaries that define difference and abnormality. Stoler explains that abnormality and degeneracy is threatening to the body politic;<sup>18</sup> punishment suppresses and controls that which is considered abnormal. This system also measures in quantitative terms each individual (or student) and places that individual in an hierarchy of values, forcing he/she to conform to the 'norm.' In effect, the goal is to make everyone

be like one another, following a predetermined pattern of thought and behavior.

Ritualized behavior repeatedly emerges within the texts and as a part of the school curriculum. Every morning students were to bow in the direction of the emperor, to pay respects to the picture of the emperor, and to annually celebrate the emperor's birthday and other national holidays. The compulsive nature of these acts illustrates the daily indoctrination of Korean students in Japanese state ideology, not to mention the undermining and erosion of Korean nationalist sentiment. The ritualization forces the students to gesture and move their bodies in a specified manner, uniformly normalizes this behavior, and has an equalizing effect in interpolating or transforming all students into subjects.

Although Japan presented itself as the hegemon, Koreans did initially have options other than colonial education. Christian missionary schools, Korean Confucian schools, and night schools in rural areas offered alternatives to the indoctrination of imperial ideology. While missionary schools worked to create good Christians rather than good subjects and night schools propagated its own communist-inspired ideology, the popularity and expansion of these schools indicate that they were a force to be reckoned with. No doubt colonial officials were aware of their influence and the need to present its own education as superior to the rest. The incorporation of Korean language and customs might have been a lure to attract more students as well as a means to create a subaltern Korean identity. But in the final analysis, the Japanese had to contend with these other forces while maintaining the delicate balance between assimilation and discrimination.

## **Conclusion**

Japanese colonial education did not simply attempt to Japanize its subjects, but as we have seen, functioned in a sophisticated and complicated way. It served several purposes at once for the colonial

regime—assimilation of its subjects in order to create loyalty and obedience; discrimination of its subjects in order to maintain Japan's hegemonic position and to justify its occupation of Korea; the construction of a subaltern Korean identity in contrast with a superior Japan; and the maintenance and consolidation of control over its subjects. Education proved to be a useful tool in establishing the power relations and reproducing the colonial social order.

The lessons found in these textbooks provide examples of appropriate deportment and show Koreans living as Japanese officials would accept. Morals education was to foster the development of a progressive people, to root out the inherent evil plaguing Koreans, and to train them for their proper role in the empire. However, the inchoate assimilation policies the Japanese implemented yielded limited progress and unlimited frustration.

This view is in agreement with recent scholarship, both here and in South Korea, which takes a position against the claim that Japanese colonial policies aimed to completely destroy Korean identity and culture (*minjok malsal*). Authors such as Chông Chaejông, Kang Ch'ang'il, and Yi Sûngnyôl all seem to argue that the Japanese were not interested in destroying Korean identity and fully assimilating or transforming them into Japanese. Instead, the Japanese pursued a policy of discrimination in order to construct a subaltern Korean identity within their limited policies of assimilation designed to create loyal and obedient imperial subjects. Although I have not been able to address the reception of this knowledge among Koreans and forms of resistance, I hope this paper has shed light on the nature of colonial rule and the role of education in identity formation and power politics.

**Keywords** : Korea–History–Japanese occupation–1910-1945, Korea–Politics and government–1910-1945, Korea–Social conditions, Korea–Education –1910-1945

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 Notes :

- 1 Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, it is useful to point out that, as the Japanese empire expanded its multi-lingual and multi-ethnic boundaries, Korean subjects were beneficiaries of hierarchical assimilation vis-à-vis subject groups that did not so closely resemble the core Japanese masters.
- 2 E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 2.
- 3 Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 11. Although Stoler concentrates her discussion on sexuality and the eroticization of colonial subjects using Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, I do not deal with the eroticization of Koreans and children in this paper. I primarily wish to use her consideration of the formation of identity and how one implies the other. Also, while I do believe that imperialism and racism are intrinsically entwined, Foucault's limited engagement with a discussion of race does not address the colonial situation. Thus, the application of Foucault's theories must be carefully thought out, bearing this in mind.
- 4 Ramon H. Myers, "Introduction," in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895 – 1945*, ed. Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 14.
- 5 *Annual Report on Administration of Chosen* (Seoul: Chōsen Sotokufu, 1918-1930), 2.
- 6 *Annual Report*, appendix I.
- 7 Dong Wonmo, "Japanese Colonial Policy and Practice in Korea, 1905 – 1945: A Study in Assimilation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1965), 377.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 384. In 1919, the local supplementary "school" tax provided only 9.42% of the entire school expenditure.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 394.
- 10 *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chosen, 1918-1921*.
- 11 E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).
- 12 For a more detailed discussion on the colonial legal system, please refer to Chulwoo Lee's "Modernity, Legality and Power in Korea under Japanese

Rule.”

- 13 For a more detailed discussion, refer to *Splendid Monarchy* by T. Fujitani. In this work, he examines the role of the emperor and public ceremonials in the construction of national consciousness and identity in Japan. He argues that through rites, rulers hoped to unite Japan’s territory under one rule and “one dominant memory.” (p. 11) Not only was the emperor the key figure in uniting its subjects (since all came under his rule and beneficence), he also embodied modernity. His imperial coach (which was actually an English carriage) and cavalcade signified “the modernity and international prestige of the Japanese monarch.” (p. 110) Fujitani claims that through the presentation of the emperor as an all-seeing monarch, the power of the disciplinary gaze dominated and controlled his subjects. It is unclear in this case as to who is doing the seeing and who is being seen. The anonymity and facelessness of the emperor add to the impression of the emperor, in my opinion, as spectacle rather than the emperor as locus of power.
- 14 Dong Wonmo, “Japanese Colonial Policy and Practice in Korea, 1905 – 1945: A Study in Assimilation” (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1965), 407.
- 15 In a chapter from *The Wartime Empire* edited by Peter Duus (1996), Wang-yao Chou examines the *kominka* movement and presents a comparative study in Taiwan and Korea. According to Chou, the efforts to Japanize Koreans included four major programs, namely “religious reform, the national language movement, the name-changing campaign, and the recruitment of military volunteers.” In comparing the campaigns in Korea with the campaigns in Taiwan, Chou argues that in Korea they were more “coercive in nature.”
- 16 Dong Wonmo, “Japanese Colonial Policy and Practice in Korea, 1905 – 1945: A Study in Assimilation” (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1965), 403.
- 17 Chou Wan-yao, “The Kominka Movement in Taiwan and Korea: Comparisons and Interpretations,” in *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945*, ed. Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 52.
- 18 Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 31.

〈Abstract〉

## Contradictions in Korean Colonial Education

*Leighanne Yuh*

The primary purpose of this paper is to examine both the ideological and sociological function of Japanese colonial education in Korea, and its implications in identity formation in the colony and to some extent in the metropole. That is, through education, the Japanese attempted to create docile bodies and docile minds in a colony considered to be simultaneously separate from and integral to “the interior.” A survey of the textbooks the Japanese Government General commissioned for use in schools in colonial Korea illuminates a basic contradiction in Japanese colonial policy. On the one hand, the texts exhibit a progressive assimilationist impulse to incorporate Koreans into the Japanese empire, and to inculcate modern ways and sensibilities for administrative efficiency. On the other hand, textbook lessons exhibit a more subtle theme of differentiation, of implicit subordination of Korean subjects to Westernized Japanese overlords.

Through colonial education, Japanese officials tried to construct an image of the metropole as modern, civilized, and enlightened; in other words, everything Korea was not. But even with Japan’s partial success in developing Korea and the similarities between the two countries, they argued that due to historical circumstances and the innate nature of the people, Korea would remain a step behind its colonizer. Being an imperial subject in Korea denoted an entirely new meaning - a meaning filled with tension and contradiction.

〈국문초록〉

## 조선 식민교육의 모순

리앤 유(고려대학교 한국사학과 교수)

이 논문의 주요 목적은 조선에서 일본의 식민교육의 이데올로기적, 사회적 기능과 식민지에서의 정체성 형성의 함의를 검토하는 것이다. 즉 식민지 조선을 “내지”와의 차별과 통합의 대상으로 간주한 일본인들은 교육을 통해 유순한 신체와 정신을 만들고자 하였다. 조선 총독부가 채택한 교과서를 분석해 보면 일본의 식민지 정책이 기본적으로 모순적이라는 것을 확인할 수 있다. 한편으로 교과서는 진보적인 동화론자들이 일본 제국에 편입되게 하고, 효율적인 통치를 위한 근대적 방식과 감성을 심어주는 것을 자극하였다. 다른 한편으로 교과서는 미묘한 차별과 조선 신민이 서양화된 일본인들에게 복종할 것을 강조하였다.

식민지 교육을 통해, 일본 관리들은 근대적이며 문명화되고 계몽된 메트로폴(metropole)의 이미지를 구축하고자 하였다. 그러나 조선이 그렇게 된 것은 아니었다. 일본은 조선을 발전시키는 데에 부분적으로만 성공하고 두 나라는 유사점이 존재함에도 불구하고, 일본 관리들은 조선의 역사적 상황과 인민의 타고난 천성 때문에 식민지 개척자의 뒤에 머무를 것이라는 논리를 펼쳤다. 조선에서 황국신민이라는 의미는 전적으로 새로운 것이었다. 즉 긴장과 모순으로 가득 차 있다는 것을 뜻하였다.

