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Independent Study in Sociology

Of Gentlemen and Champions: The Japanese Colonial Empire

When it ceased to exist in 1945, the Japanese colonial empire had been unique in the world, as it was the only non-European – or rather non-Western – colonial empire in the world, that had been formed during the long age of colonization. At its height during the Second World War, the Japanese colonial empire controlled vast swaths of land and ocean, and ruled over millions of people including Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, and many other indigenous peoples of the Far and Southeastern Asia. In the fifty years of its existence, from 1895 to 1945, the Japanese colonial empire became for the Japanese a crash course in colonization, beginning as an imitation of the West by a modernizing Japan, and ended up with structures and implications that were uniquely Japanese. This period of fifty years was filled with changes in the political, social, and economic structures and prerogatives of Japan, all of which were reflected in its foreign and colonial policies and dealings.

In this study, I will be aiming to answer the question of in what ways has the Japanese colonial rhetoric changed during its lifespan, in response to socio-political changes in the metropolis of Imperial Japan – with particular emphasis on the changes in the political orientations of the Japanese leadership. In asking and answering this question, I will be looking at the changing racial and economic attitudes towards the colonies in Japan, as the main indicator of how changes in the metropolis affected changes in colonial policies. As such, the main focus will be on Korea and Taiwan, which have been the most important of the colonies of Imperial Japan, by their sheer population sizes, economic importance, and significance to the Japanese war effort in the China-Pacific region. However, where necessary other colonial entities within the Japanese empire, such as Manchuria will be discussed as illustrative examples of Japanese colonial policy. The main argument here is that, as the socio-political conditions within Japan

1

have changed, due to internal and external conditions and developments, the colonial policy has

changed accordingly to reflect these changes. The aim is to understand the connections between

periods of specific socio-political configuration and changes in metropolitan Japan, and the

changing attitudes towards the colonies and the colonized peoples. Guiding the framework of the

discussion in this paper, will be the work of Nakae Chōmin, "*A Discourse by Three Drunkards

on Government*"[1] which has been a text that has anticipated the development of the Japanese

colonial empire in particular ways. Thus, the discussion in this paper will begin with an

exploration of Chōmin's work, which will then move into discussing the conditions and changes

of the Japanese metropolis and the according attitudes and policies toward the colonies. This will

be done by dividing these eras into two with the first between 1895 and 1929, and the second

between 1929 and 1945.

Before moving into the body of this paper, it must be noted that despite the tendency of

this paper to generalize the experience of Japanese colonialism in Korea and Taiwan, and

although they were ruled and developed in response to the same metropolitan socio-political and

economic trends, there were divergences between the two. One difference has been that, while

the Taiwanese landed elite were allowed to flee back to China, the Korean elites – called

yangbans – remained in Korea and functioned as part of the Japanese mechanism of rule over

Korea. While the Taiwanese ruling classes could be substituted easily by migrant Japanese or

those that remained whom were friendly to the Japanese, in Korea the ruling classes were

expected to answer to a new master, which brought about its own frictions. Another difference

has been that – as I shall discuss later on in more detail – while both the Taiwanese and the

Korean people were colonized, the Koreans were the primary colonial "others" of the Japanese

and thus received a greater emphasis and burden from the racial attitudes and policies of Japan.

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[1] The book itself was originally published in 1887. From here on, it will be referred to as the *Discourse*.

Thus, the Koreans found themselves more to be the target of Japanese policies of assimilation and control than the Taiwanese did, because the Japanese colonial discourse brought them to the fore. As such, it can be seen that the experience of colonization has not exactly been uniform across these colonies. However, for both colonial entities there were broadly generalizable patters and policies being pursued by the Japanese, which will be the primary focus of this study.

Master Nankai, the Gentleman, and the Champion

The work of Chōmin in the *Discourse*, as we have already mentioned, is one which has anticipated the strands of colonial development and imperial expansion which Japan could have and has taken during the fifty years of colonization which it experienced. As the title suggests, the book takes on the structure of a discussion between three men: Master Nankai, who is an intermediary, the Gentleman, and the Champion. Our focus here is on the latter two personifications, and the type of persons, ideas and policies they embody within the text. This is because these two characters are the embodiments of two polar opposite political possibilities open to the Japanese, on their path to a global and colonial empire which can survive in the modern world between giants like Russia, United Kingdom, or the United States.

The Gentleman, "was dressed completely in European style… [had] a slim body… appeared to be a philosopher… [who] breathed the air of moral principles and marched forward along the straight line of logic" (Chōmin 49). From this description we are given the idea that the Gentleman is someone who embodies the Japanese who have become fully modernized along Western lines, and have thus adopted the higher philosophical and moral struggles and ideas of the West. Moreover, he is an idealist who favors total disarmament of Japan and her commitment to the greater brotherhood of mankind and peace (Chōmin 50-51). As such, the highest pursuit of policy for the Gentleman type is constructed as a larger commitment to peaceful coexistence

with the peoples and races of the world. The path to enrich the nation, for the Gentleman, passes

through the liberalization and modernization of education and society, which would allow both

the common folk and the men of trades to thrive and uplift the nation (Chōmin 62). Thus, the

growth and glory of the Japanese nation does not pass through the conquest of other peoples, but

lies in the betterment of the Japanese people, and ostensibly in the betterment of those who wish

to share in the fruits of Japanese moral and scholarly development.

In politics, the Gentleman values constitutionalism as the superior political structure,

especially when compared to an autocratic or despotic form of rule, which was pointedly

relevant considering the Shogunate and the Imperial system were both such forms of rule

(Chōmin 69). Furthermore, he finds autocrats and the hereditary warrior types in government

useless and detrimental to the furthering of the value and glory of the Japanese (Chōmin 58).

What is important for the Gentleman is the creation of a value, not surplus or economic value but

human value, which he argues can only be brought forth under political structures open to the

public and without a hereditary class which leeches on the work of others. The ideal nation of the

Gentleman is one whose political structures are based on electoral democracy and equality,

which has thrown away all tools of war and dedicated itself to brotherhood of man and

scholarship, and provides its peoples with the greatest amount of rights and freedoms

conceivable (Chōmin 79-80, 121). Thus, the Gentleman is in search of a country where the

people are seen as equals without discrimination, and there is the greatest level of possible peace

and freedom for the people to coexist and thrive.

The Champion "was a tall man with thick arms", whose looks indicated that he was "a

man who loved grandeur and cherished adventure, a member of the society of champions who

fish for the pleasures of fame with their lives as bait" (Chōmin 49). From this image, the

Champion was someone who embodied the samurai values and the fighting spirit which could be said to drive the statist logic of government – he is fully and purely Japanese in his thoughts and outlook upon the world. The Champion sees that wars come from quarrels between the nations, and that the strength of a nation is the measure of its civility (Chōmin 93-94). In this line of thinking, it is the size of Japan's army and its prowess in battle which will show to the Western powers – which were obviously the most civilized in this equation – the civility of Japan.

The Champion acknowledges a fundamental crisis of security for Japan, which posits that the moment opportunity presents itself, it will be invaded by the stronger nations, which were obviously – although not explicitly in the text – the Western powers (Chōmin 99). Thus, the strength of Japan was not only the measure of its success and civility but also its guarantee in independence, not because it could fight these stronger and more civilized nations, but because it could position itself amongst these nations. As such in the imagination of the Champion, the Japanese had to conquer new lands and once there they had to "promote agriculture, encourage commerce, subsidize industry" and increase the wealth of both the government and the people, and use this newfound wealth to "purchase" the tools of civilization from the West (Chōmin 101). Thus, Japan would have to conquer, invest, and exploit those overseas territories – more aptly called colonies – for the success and survival of the metropolis – the path was set for forceful colonization and economic integralization.

The discussion in the following sections, in regards to discussing the internal conditions of the Japanese metropolis, will be aimed at locating each era as within the ideological scope of either the Gentleman or the Champion, and then exploring colonial policy and attitudes in relation to these periodizations. For both personifications – or rather perceptional categories – there are markers we could identify broadly here, which will serve as indicators that in a given

5

period, we are dealing with either the Gentleman or Champion types of leaders and socio-political conditions. For those periods where we can see socio-political developments compatible with more liberal and peaceful policies and politics, we can argue that the Gentleman is in power. Thus, in terms of the racial and economic attitudes towards the colonies we should also expect to see a more accepting policy, which might even promote coexistence and the uplifting of the colonized populations. On the other side, in those periods where it can be observed that the socio-political developments are more compatible with authoritarian and militaristic policies and politics, we can argue that the Champion is in power. As such, in terms of the racial and economic attitudes towards the colonies we should expect to see harsher oppression and greater exploitation for the benefit of the metropolis. It is also important to note that the idea in using such a categorical division is not to specifically point towards persons and analyze them in this colonial and socio-political discussion, but rather to capture the *zeitgeist* of the period in question.

Founding Father Champions and Parliamentarian Gentlemen – 1895 to 1929

In this section, we will focus on the period between 1895 and 1929, cradled between two important turning points for the Japanese: the beginning of the colonial empire, and the Great Depression. As we shall see, this period saw the rise and development of the Japanese colonial rhetoric and policies, and the creation of the Japanese colonial empire in its fullest, non-World War extent. This empire was forged in war and conflict with other major regional powers – especially the Chinese and the Russians – and saw an ascendant Japan, which came to rule over territories already populated by peoples of advanced and historically rooted civilizations of their own. What essentially influenced Japanese policy towards its colonial empire thus became its own internal driving prerogatives and the need to respond to the conditions which existed and developed within the colonies. Later in this period, as we shall see especially after the First

World War (WWI), the Japanese policy for their colonial empire also responded to foreign influences and developments which affected the Japanese outlook towards the world and the empire. As such, we shall explore this period in two further subperiods, former where the Champions have created the colonial empire, and latter where the Gentlemen have taken over policy-making regarding this empire after WWI. However, it is important to note here, that neither of these "types" have never existed in their pure forms, and as we shall see the Japanese leaders have had common ground between them, despite falling into one of the two categories employed in this paper.

The initial period of colonization by the Japanese coincided with the rule of Champion type leaders, working under highly autocratic political conditions within Japan, as these politicians were looking for ways to modernize Japan, and build a nation in the form of an empire (Pollard 6; Gordon 122-124). They acted under the rule of Emperor Meiji, who remained as a grand figure in Japanese public life, as the father of the nation, to whom all owed allegiance and service – a symbol and constant reminder of the autocratic and militaristic imperial rule in Japan. This was a period of transitions and rapid acting modernization for what was once a poor nation on the edge of Asia, and the leaders – of samurai origins themselves – reflected the militaristic and autocratic outlook which made them the *Founding Father Champions* of this period in Japanese politics and colonization. As such, preferred tool of colonization for these Champions was war, and the preferred actor was the Imperial Japanese military and specifically the Army.

Beginning in 1895, with the Japanese acquisition of Taiwan as a colony from the Chinese, the empire was pursuing a course of action which its leaders believed would enhance the prestige of the nation, by showing to the West that the Japanese also could and did have colonies (Kublin

7

76; Weiner, *Invention of Identity*, 110; Duus, *Introduction*, 3, 12; Peattie, *Japanese Attitudes*, 82). After all, the Japanese were the latest nation to join the global imperialist competition, and having found itself beset by giants on all sides, had decided to move towards modernizing itself after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Arguably, the primary goal of this new empire – and her Champions – was to have its civilization and power acknowledged by the West, as an equal Great Power that could not and would not be colonized itself (Etō 115; Kublin 76; Duus, *Introduction*, 15; Peattie, *Japanese Attitudes*, 82; Gann 502-503). However, the Japanese reasons for colonizing Taiwan went deeper than a simple desire to prove the level of Japanese modernization and power to the West, gaining acknowledgement of Japanese parity in power and development – it also stemmed from a much simpler need for the protection of the Japanese homeland (Duus, *Introduction*, 15, 17; Palat, Lecture; Beasley 254; Pollard 16; Jansen 76; Gann 498-499). In every colonial acquisition, the Japanese Champions were driven by an overriding need to secure Japanese lands and resources which were essential to the making of the empire, which led to a vicious cycle –which saw the Japanese lands growing farther yet the empire finding itself insecure, with the only solution to the problem being the further growth of the empire (Peattie, *Introduction*, 9; Gann 503; Gordon 121). Whilst the Champions here were seemingly more interested in the physical and strategical security of the empire, in time, as we shall see in the next section of this study, this need to find security for Japan encompassed economic security as well.

As mentioned above, the Champions preferred to extend their influence over what came to be Japanese colonies through war and the active use of the Japanese military. The colonization of Taiwan set the method of colonization for the Japanese for the foreseeable future, as this event had proven that the relatively newly formed modern Japanese military could now hold its own in

fights against what was seen as formidable enemies and leave Japan better off after the war. The colonization of Korea only followed the established pattern, although its success was in flux until it became definite in 1905. Japan emerged from the war against the Russians in 1905, not only in control of the Korean peninsula – as an overlord of the Korean protectorate – but it also emerged as an imperial power which could match one of the biggest of the European militaries and hold its own (Gordon 119-120). Once again, war paid off in the enlargement of the Japanese colonial empire, over a region of the world the Japanese had long had an interest in, and which they saw as a strategically integral to the defense of the Japanese homeland (Sharma 68-69; Kublin 79; Pollard 9, 13). Such militaristic approaches to the acquisition and the meaning of the empire brought an oppressive slant to colonial policies and administration. These colonial structures tended to fully exclude the colonized peoples from the more meaningful decision-making posts, and in the case of Korea created an entire police state on its pursuit for greater control over the population (Etō 119, 121; Kim, *An Overview*, 45; Chen, *Korea and Formosa*, 134).

After World War One however, there is a visible shift in the policies and attitudes of the Japanese towards the colonies, accompanies by internal political changes. The Gentlemen rose to power, with a call for greater parliamentarian, and in fact party led politics and political rule – labelled Taisho democracy, it flourished under a sickly and less assertive emperor than Meiji, which allowed for a civilian ascendancy in the imperial state machinery (Reischauer 146-148; Gordon 161-162). There were also socio-economic changes within Japan as Western culture and styles found their way into Japan in greater quantities and the Japanese society began to adopt these cultural elements into its own fabric. Liberalism, democracy, and parliamentarism were very much buzzwords and the new ruling elites were no longer of the same mettle as the *Founding Father Champions* of the preceding years were – they were *Parliamentarian*

Gentlemen. As such, they did not favor the use of the military and war in their colonial efforts, and in fact one can argue that the period of the Gentlemen was focused more upon consolidating the colonial empire through peaceful means, rather than trying to enlarge it through a series of further wars. The peaceful and liberal approach of the Gentlemen translated into a style of colonial rule which was relatively less oppressive and more inclusive of the colonized peoples that the earlier policies and attitudes of the Champions were. Pressures on keeping down these colonized peoples were partially lifted, and under the guise of pan-Asianism, especially in Korea, the existing civilizational heritage was now portrayed as valuable and an integral part of the Japanese empire (Reischauer 149-150; Kal 509, 514; Gordon 178).

However, as we have mentioned before, there did exist common ground between both the Champions and the Gentlemen of this era. Arguably, the most important things which brought the political leaders of both types together was their devotion to the security and preservation of the empire, and their desire to have it become modernized along Western lines and acknowledged as an equal to the Western powers. These commonalities in turn provided for an unbroken economic and racial view and policy towards the colonies of Japan, despite a shift in internal conditions of Japan and the type of leaders it had.

Economically, these colonies – as is the logic of colonial empires – were meant to feed the metropolis, and in the Japanese case, this point was quite literal. Facing problems in rice production at home, or finding that the colonies were fit for the production of a certain agricultural good such as sugar in Taiwan, the economies of the colonies were structured and developed in order to bring in foodstuffs to Japan (Sharma 71; Kimura 558; Chang 171-172; Kang 79; Lee 16; Ho 350). In the case of Korea, this meant that the rice harvest of the colony was shipped largely to feed Japan, in what amounted to starvation exports, with imports of lesser

grains from elsewhere (Kimura 559; Kim, *Economic Change*, 107). This policy remained

constant throughout this period, as Japan was struggling to define itself and its position within

the world, and primarily needed an agricultural base to feed its own metropolitan population,

while it industrialized and urbanized the metropolis itself. However, these economic

developments did not happen in ways that were meant to benefit the colonized as much as they

did the Japanese. Apart from the starvation exports mentioned before, the Japanese also enacted

land reform which exacerbated conditions of rural poverty and tenancy, and a significant amount

of agricultural production was done on land owned by the Japanese, or were done by or in the

name of Japanese corporations (Kimura 562; Kim, *An Overview*, 47; Kim, *Economic Change*,

101). As such, whatever economic development was recorded in the colonies were underwritten

or undone by the rampant discriminatory and pauperizing activities of the colonial structures, or

were done in ways that benefitted the Japanese on multiple fronts.

Racial attitudes and policies regarding the colonized peoples of Japan were also largely

uniform, although it can be observed that under the leadership of the Gentlemen, attitudes were

softer than it was under the Champions (Kim, *An Overview*, 42). For the Japanese, the people

they colonized were at the same time both undeniably similar and astonishingly different. The

Japanese discourse on similarities noted that these people shared the same culture, same script,

and the same racial classifications with the Japanese who ruled over them (Duus, *Defining the

Koreans*, 399; Kim, *Asianism*, 11; Peattie, *Japanese Attitudes*, 97). For the most part, this was

good news for the Japanese colonial empire as it meant that it would not be ruling over entirely

different people, but over familiar people with familiar cultures and societies that would allow

the Japanese administrations to work with greater ease, and hopefully have wider acceptance.

However, these similarities also meant that the Japanese could not easily turn these people into

11

colonial other because not only were they similar to the Japanese themselves, but they had their own civilization, which had existed perhaps as long as the Japanese one did. As such, the Japanese were not able to easily push these people out of the perimeters of civilization because doing so meant incurring the resentment of key colonial populations in Korea and Taiwan.

Recognizing the problem that having such similarities meant, the Japanese were nevertheless able to construct these colonized others as different and alien peoples. Especially with regards to the Koreans, their approach found that these people were definitely of the same race and stock of the Japanese, but had diluted themselves so much that they had become inferior vis-à-vis the purer "*Yamato*" Japanese (Weiner, *Self and Other*, 2, 9; Weiner, *Invention of Identity*, 99; Duus, *Defining the Koreans*, 419). As such, these colonized populations were akin to Japan's "adopted children" who had in their own fundamental make-up the contents of a greatness for a modern nation, but only under Japanese tutelage and under the Japanese banner could they ever hope to unlock their potentials (Weiner, *Self and Other*, 15; Beasley 245; Szpilman 90; Peattie, *Japanese Attitudes*, 99). Through such a paradigm of racial difference, the Japanese not only maintained their fundamental ties to the people they colonized in order to reap the benefits of such similarity, but they also placed themselves higher above in terms of racial purity and greatness, and civilizational development. They also assumed a Japanized version of the *mission civilisatrice*, where they made the pretense of not only uplifting an entire civilization which was found to be "backwards" but an entire race which was seen as inferior yet similar enough to be saved by an infusion of superior blood.

The Japanese were also able to construct their own territorially linked divisions between the colonies and the metropolis, on their own terms, by naming the metropolis *"naichi"* meaning mainland or homeland, and the colonies as *"gaichi"* meaning overseas territories (Etō 118; Kim,

12

An Overview, 49; Chen, *Attempt to Integrate*, 241-242). Using such indigenous terms, the

Japanese were able set up and reify another dimension of discrimination against their colonial

subjects by elevating the four main islands of Japan – and their people – to the position of the

Japanese empire's "insiders" whilst positioning people in the colonies as the "outsiders". This

division not only added to the discrimination and the inferior status of the colonized, but also

worked to set a social and racial standard of superiority and civility within the empire. By

acknowledging the Japanese islands and its people as the "proper" Japan and the "proper"

Japanese, the Japanese were able to set up a system in which they could portray themselves as

the bearers of civilization within their empire and in Asia, and could thus justify their civilizing

mission towards their colonial subjects.

The Emperor's Warlord Champions – 1929 to 1945

The second period of Japan's colonial empire existed between two events whose

significance and impact went beyond the boundaries of Japan: the Great Depression and the end

of the Second World War with the surrender of the Japanese. Just as the turn of economic tides

helped in the rise of fascism in Italy under Mussolini, and Nazism in Germany under Hitler,

Japan saw a sharp turn back to military dominated ultra-nationalist politics, and the rise of the

Champions once again. Although this period opens with the Gentlemen of the previous one in

power, the ongoing political and economic crises compounded onto one another and while

allowing for the rise of the *Warlord Champions*, whom were usually men of military rank that

claimed to work in the name of the Emperor to protect and assert the power of Japan (Reischauer

168-169). As the Champions rose into power, the Gentlemen were either increasingly oppressed

or were absorbed into the rising ultra-nationalist tides, which drew power from an impoverished

rural base – which also provided most of the troops – and was highly skeptical of party politics,

13

liberalism, and zaibatsu led capitalism (Szpilman 77; Reischauer 157-158; Gordon 182). This primacy of the Champions was further cemented with the beginning of the Second World War, and the incorporation of the needs and necessities of the war into the economic and racial policies of the Champions towards the colonial empire. The war not only allowed for internal economic concerns to be fused in the rhetoric and policies of the Champions but it also brought upon Japan economic pressures from the British and American embargoes to oil and metal, which the Champions were able to spin in order to justify the further growth of the empire in self-sufficiency (Buruma 115-116).

The return of the Champion meant a return to war and the military as the preferred method and tool of the Japanese imperial and colonial policies of expansion and control. Starting with the Mukden Incident of 1931, the creation of the puppet state of Manchukuo in Manchuria, the Japanese began their larger – and historically final – colonial push into China with all its manpower and natural resources (Reischauer 170-171). It was not until the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 with the Marco Polo Bridge Incident that total war was embraced as the mode of colonial occupation and expansion by the Japanese into China. The scale of invasion and resistance to colonization in China caused war to change from a brief one-shot method, for the colonial expansion of the Japanese empire, into a protracted reality where boundaries of a secure empire could not be drawn and a massive drain on resources replaced the hoped-for security of resources. As China became the colony that could not be had, it became the swamp which ultimately stunted the growth of the Japanese colonial empire, elsewhere in the Asia and the Pacific. Another important development in the methods of colonial acquisition was that these wars of expansion came as *fait accompli* to the leadership on Tokyo, as the soldiers on the ground, such as the Kwantung Army, took it upon themselves to enlarge the empire (Gordon 186,

187; Buruma 89). As such, before the Champions located in the metropolis of Japan could decide on a course of action, the Champions at the colonies acted – in the name of the Emperor – to enlarge the borders and the resource base of the empire.

With regards to economic policy, the outlook of the Champions of this era was geared towards sustaining an empire engaged in total war to enlarge its own colonial empire elsewhere, whilst depending on the resources and development of the colonies which it already controlled. Encapsulated in a single word, the Japanese colonial empire was aiming to achieve one thing in this era: *autarky*. Because the major colonies of Japan, and especially Korea, was strategically located in close proximity to China to allow for military and industrial supplies to be easily shipped to the soldiers on the front, and thus industrialization of the colonies took place (Chang 175-176; Kang 80; Kim, *Economic Change*, 105; Lee 17, 33; Peattie, *Introduction*, 33; Ho 351). Of course, to say that the Japanese industrialized their colonies due to wartime necessities is not to claim that the colonies were ultimately better off instead of such investments. Industry was developed with Japanese capital and manned by skilled Japanese labor, which did not allow for the colonized peoples of Korea and Taiwan to develop their own human capital (Sharma 71; Chang 176-177; Kim, *An Overview*, 47; Kang 80; Lee 7, 9, 15, 31; Ho 356, 376).

In addition to these aspects of industrialization of the Japanese colonies, another condition which ensured that the colonized did not benefit from such investments lies in the nature of such investments. After all, the Japanese were not interested in industrializing their colonial economic bases in order to improve the welfare of the colonized. The goods produced in the industrial plants of the colonies were used to aid the Japanese military in its war efforts, and thus rather than aid the colonized in any way, the good produced were meant to bring others under the same colonial conditions. However, the Japanese Champions were able to put in place

a system which integrated the colonial economy with the metropolitan economy, in order to fuel the Japanese war machine and sufficiently industrialized the colonies in order to do so.

In their racial attitudes, the Champions of this era employed two different policies – whose coexistence was ironic in themselves – in the further construction and maintenance of the empire. On the one hand, the Japanese pushed for pan-Asianism, under the slogan "Asia for Asians", while on the other side they radically pushed for the assimilation of the people they colonized into the Japanese identity. Pan-Asianism drew upon the racial similarities which the Japanese had already identified with their colonial subjects, and the concurrent superiority that came find finding these colonial subjects to be lesser and racially diluted and inferior. As such, the policy of pan-Asianism contained within itself fundamental contradictions, which were only justified within the colonial pretexts of the Japanese empire. While the Japanese pushed the idea that the Asians were to become liberated and masters of their own destinies in their own nations, Japanese tutelage and primacy over these nations loomed as the reality (Etō 116; Weiner, *Self and Other*, 15; Beasley 234, 243; Tamanoi 255; Kim, *Asianism*, 26-27). One of the prime examples was in Manchukuo, where the Japanese puppet state was based on the "harmony of five races" but the Japanese were clearly set aside as the superior of the five races (Tamanoi 249-250; Szpilman 93-94).

Elsewhere, more so in the pointed example of Korea, this policy translated into a message of colonial development under Japanese rule, and cooperation between the colonizers and the colonized in the further growth of the colonial empire (Ching 92-93; Kal 510, 514). As such, the policy of pan-Asianism was meant to blur out the racial, as well as cultural and civilizational, differences between the Japanese colonizers and the people they colonized. However, this policy was meant to also portray the Japanese as colonizers who existed as benevolent overseers and

16

leaders over a vast Asian empire of supposedly independent nations, whom they would elevate – in time – to their own level of civilization and development.

Despite using such political rhetoric of racial and civilizational cooperation and equality being employed towards the colonies, the Japanese Champions radicalized in their push to assimilate, and Japanize their colonial populations. Assimilation was especially pushed upon Korea, whose strategic closeness – both to Japan and to China – and its economic importance in agriculture and industry for the Japanese metropolis and military made it the prime receiver of Japanese attention as a colony. The Japanese policy in Korea went towards stamping out the Korean identity by banning the language, forcing upon the people Japanese names, and the adoption of Japanese religious and cultural mores (Sharma 70; Kublin 80; Kim, *An Overview*, 42-43; Cheng 97). The aim was to break down the cultures and civilizations which the Japanese came to rule over in their colonies, and to Japanize the colonial population in the short term by through deeds and actions – rather than in the long term through a policy of educational assimilation. As such, the Japanese carried their civilizing mission to the extreme by actively engaging in the destruction of a civilization which they had already deemed inferior, and by promoting their own in its stead to the colonized people.

Making Sense of the Internal Politics and Colonial Attitudes

Looking back upon the formative years of the Japanese colonial empire, between 1895 and 1929, we can find that this period was led in Japan by leaders who were committed to building a strong nation and a strong empire, which could compete with the West. While the Champion type leaders and politics dominated the internal and colonial political scene until the end of the First World War in 1918, the succeeding decade saw the ascendancy of the Gentleman type leaders and politics within the metropolis. However, when things came down to the wire,

although both leader types differed in both the directions they took the empire – expansion

versus consolidation – and their preferred methods of doing so – war versus economics and

administration – the central and fundamental focus of their policies remained constant. Of course,

we must note the fundamental difference, that the rule of the Champions saw more oppressive

and heavy-handed military governance, whilst the rule of the Gentlemen saw a relaxation of the

oppressive measures and greater leeway for the colonized. However, these token changes should

not and do not deter us from recognizing the overarching racial and economic undercurrents

where the colonial others of the Japanese were discriminated against as educatable inferior

peoples, whose labor and products were to serve the Japanese at home, no matter the cost. Once

the colonial policies and attitudes had been set in motion, it is clear that the concerns of

supporting and uplifting Japan became much more important for both types of leaders within this

period, and thus their policies and attitudes towards the colonies did not shift because their main

concern of sustaining Japan did not change.

Looking into the period between the years of 1929 and 1945, in which the politics of the

Japanese empire was largely dominated by a new military bred leadership of Champion types,

whom were committed to using the methods they knew best for the growth and glory of the

empire. In retrospect, one can make the observation that their rise to the political scene made the

preceding era of Gentlemen appear as a period when the Japanese empire was catching its breath

in the aftermath of WWI, and settling down in the colonies. However, decision-making with

regards to acts of war to enlarge the colonial empire also shifted to the Champions in the

colonies, who were actively in command of armies which were the tools of colonial growth.

Economically, these leaders set out to and largely accomplished the task of integrating the

colonial and the metropolitan economies into one larger imperial economy, which sought out

self-sufficiency – which also called for the enlargement of the colonial empire to gain access to

key resources in yet uncolonized[2] areas. The economic exploitation, under such a system of

autarky, was totalized to the extent that the goods produced by one colonial people was to be

used in the colonization of other – they system was thus not only meant to be self-sustaining but

also self-growing. In their attitudes towards race in the colonies, the Champions of this period

built upon the foundations set in the period preceding them and took their policies to the two

extremes simultaneously. Whilst promoting unity of the Asiatic races, under the Japanese

tutelage and leadership, through pan-Asianism on the one side, the Japanese also engaged in

active assimilation and Japanization of their colonial subjects by destroying existing cultures and

instead promoting their own.

Between the two periods there is definitely a unity of vision and policy, whether direct or

inherited, which can be seen continuing until the end of the Japanese colonial empire altogether.

In their own turns, both the Champions and the Gentlemen could not shake off the need to act for

the security of the Japanese empire, and the associated view of the colonies as the backbone of

both military and material security of the Japanese metropolis. They shared the same underlying

assumptions that the colonies were meant to become economical adjuncts of the metropolis, by

providing it with the agricultural goods it needs to sustain itself or the industrial goods it needs to

wage war and enlarge its colonial reach. For all three groups of leaders, the colonized peoples –

Koreans, Chinese, Manchu, and other indigenous Far Eastern peoples – were inferior and could

only be brought to the level of modern civilization that the Japanese, and the West, enjoyed

under the watchful gaze of the Japanese themselves. Although the later *Warlord Champions*

pushed the point of assimilation most radically, neither the *Founding Father Champions* nor the

Parliamentarian Gentlemen had actually excluded such an approach from their own rhetoric,

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[2] Uncolonized here is used in reference to regions not colonized by Japan.

where these colonized people – especially in Korea – were of the same race but only of diluted stock. Thus, for all three leadership types, the ultimate Japanization of the colonized peoples of the Japanese empire was a natural outcome of their colonization, which would have worked to return these people to their roots. As such, despite differences in their methods in the making of, and their ultimate visions and ideals for the future of the Japanese empire, these leaders showed remarkable convergence and similarities in fundamental points of their policy choices.

Concluding the Japanese Colonial Experience

Before making the closing remarks of this study, it is important to note one thing that appears with regards to the theoretical framework – which is also a criticism to the work of Nakae Chōmin – which should be reflected upon. Looking back on the expectations in Chōmin's work for the two divergent paths of development open to the Japanese in pursuit of their colonial empire, it is not hard to spot that reality has not exactly come to support this theoretical outlook. Of course, it is possible to identify differences between the leaders, their times, and their policies and to categorize them as Champions or Gentlemen of the Japanese empire. However, it is not entirely possible to draw such distinctions with full clarity and distinction between the two groups. After all, we have seen that in terms of their basic economic and racial attitudes and policies towards the colonies, both the Champions and the Gentlemen in charge of the Japanese empire have had fundamental convergences, parallels, and inherited similarities between them. Whether this invalidates the entirety of the framework which Chōmin provides the reader, and this study with is the subject of an entire study of its own. However, it can safely be said that as analytical categories the divisions suggested by Chōmin are effective and useful, as long as the deeper nuances and historically proven convergences between groups are recognized by the reader and the researcher.

Looking back on the discussion of this paper it can be seen that the socio-political changes in metropolitan Japan, signified by changes in leadership types between Champions and Gentlemen, have had significant impact on the life experiences of the colonial subjects of the Japanese empire. These changes affected the severity of oppression experienced by the colonized; the modes and levels economic development of and investment in the colonies; and racial discrimination and assimilation which the colonized had to experience at the hands of the Japanese. Furthermore, changes in leadership types also resulted in changes to the preferred means and tools of colonial expansion and exploitation that has been employed by the Japanese in their colonies. In a comparative vein, the Japanese colonial empire had not been any different than its European predecessors in that socio-political changes in the metropolis were reflected through changes in its policies and attitudes towards the colonized – it only did so in a much shorter time span.

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