

# Korean Migration and Japanese Colonialism

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## Abstract

This paper outlines the historical background to Korean migration and Japanese colonialism in order to understand the birth and formation of the Korean population in Japan (Zainichi Koreans). Through this exploration, this paper shows how Japan attempted to assimilate the Koreans into the bottom of Japanese society and to destroy their ethnic identity as Koreans. It also examines how the racial discourse of the Japanese 'superior race' had been developed and played an integral part in justifying its socio-economic and subjugation of East Asian people including Koreans during the colonial period.

**Keywords:** Zainichi Koreans, Korean migration, Japanese colonialism, ethnicity

## I. Introduction

It is estimated that currently there are about one million Zainichi Koreans, who are Korean descendants of former Japanese colonial subjects. Zainichi Koreans have historical origins which can be traced back to Japan's colonisation of the Korean peninsula for 36 years from 1910 to 1945, following a period of five years of proto-colonialism (1905-1910). This paper looks at the procedures of Japan's annexation of Korea and the resultant Korean migration. It examines Japanese colonial history and the assimilation policy adopted by the Japanese government, which attempted to destroy their ethnic identity as Koreans and it tried to assimilate them into the bottom of Japanese society at the same time. This paper also delineates the life conditions, employment, and education of ethnic Koreans in Japan. Also, in this paper, the *Kyōwakai*, the institution which was most influential to the implementation of assimilation programmes is examined. The final section of this paper explores the formation of Japanese racial ideas and nationalism, and the attitudes of Japanese people towards Koreans.

## II. Annexation of Korea and Japanese Colonial History

The history of Zainichi Koreans dates back to when U.S. Commodore Perry arrived in Japan in the 1850s and the two hundred years of Tokugawa Japan's seclusion (*sakoku*) ended, which occurred in the wake of pressure from Western countries to open the country. In order to be recognised as a civilised country and to follow the Western powers, the newly established Meiji government of Japan chose the path for the reformation of its state system and Japanese nationals' culture and lifestyles (Komori 2003). Contemporary leaders introduced institutional innovations and abolished legal distinctions between classes, *Shi-nō-kō-shō* system (a class distinction

divided into samurais at the top, followed by farmers, craftspersons, and finally merchants at the bottom). They also removed restrictions on occupation and residence and introduced compulsory education and military conscription (Vasishth 1997: 114).

The success of these reforms was essential for Japanese modernisation, and Japan started thinking of itself as a new leader in Asia in the modern era from the 1880s. Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese war of 1895 followed by another victory in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, strengthened the conviction that Japan had succeeded in modernisation and kept abreast with Western powers. Japan attempted to secure a position as a civilised country in the international arena by 'internalising the world order made by Western powers' (Komori 2001: 11, own translation). Possessing imperialistic ambitions, Japan gradually started expanding its military power in Asia. After absorbing Korea in 1910, in 1931 Japan began its invasion of China and the Japanese army established Manchukuo in what is now the Northeastern part of China, which was made an 'independent' state. Nevertheless, the Western countries recognised Manchuria as a 'sham state' and never acknowledged this as an official state (Duus 1992). After 1940, the idea of a Japanese-dominated Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was enhanced through Japan's imperialistic control of many regions in Asia until the end of the Second World War in 1945.

Previous to annexation of the Korean Peninsula in 1910, Japan had occupied Hokkaido, the northern part of Japan in 1873, and also conquered the Ryukyus in 1879 and Taiwan in 1895. Japan forced Korea to sign an unequal treaty and to open its ports to Japanese trade in 1876. In this treaty, Japan unilaterally acquired extraterritorial rights. Subsequently due to unexpected Japanese victories in the Sino-Japanese war and the Russo-Japanese War, Japan acquired momentum in its imperialistic ambitions. In 1910 Japan formally annexed Korea and deprived it of its independence. The Governor-General of Korea held all the power and control over military affairs as well as legislative, judicial, and administrative processes in Korea (Katano 2010: 93). The colonised countries were cut off from the rest of the world and marginalised within the Japanese empire after annexation. Imperial Japan destroyed their centuries-old national systems of government, justice, and education and replaced them with Japanese structures (Taira 1997: 142-43).

The presence of some Koreans in Japan was recognised before annexation in 1910; several thousand Korean workers in coal mines, and construction sites were residing in cities in Japan. (Seo, G. 1995: 78) However, full-scale migration of Koreans started after annexation in 1910 under the process of Japan's colonialism. For the development of agriculture in the peninsula, the colonial government undertook a land survey to determine land value and ownership and to classify all arable land between 1910 and 1918 (Lee and De Vos 1981b: 33). In so doing, the government rationalised the registration of agricultural lands opening them to investment from Japanese and Korean entrepreneurs, and actively encouraged Japanese farmers to settle in Korea (Weiner 1994: 40). As a result, an enormous number of Japanese emigrated to Korea. It is estimated by 1940 there were over 700,000 Japanese in Korea (Lee and De Vos 1981b: 33). On the other hand, as a consequence of the land survey, a large number of Korean farmers were forced into tenancy. Approximately 80 percent of Korean farmers lost their farm lands (Katano 2010: 97), and a large number of Koreans, excluding certain members of the indigenous elite,

suffered great economic hardship. Part of the resultant surplus labour, comprised of impoverished and uprooted Koreans, was destined for Japan proper, where people moved to acquire a means of livelihood, whilst others made for Seoul, Manchuria and Siberia (Yamashiro and Kim 2003: 207). In the midst of the rapid industrial expansion after the First World War, Japanese industrialists found it beneficial to recruit these impoverished Korean farmers as cheap labour. Many Japanese employers in textiles, chemicals or coal-mining recruited Koreans as temporary labour (Weiner 1994: 54-55). Although regulations on Koreans' migration to Japan became strict in 1919, impoverished Korean farmers continued to arrive in Japan. By 1911 there were only 2,527 Koreans in Japan, but by 1920 there were more than 30,000 Koreans living in Japan (Seo, G. 1995).

From 1927 (1925 unofficially) to 1939, applicants for entry to Japan were subjected to relatively restrictive entry regulations. For example, individuals without a definite job awaiting them in Japan or those who were not recruited through legitimate agencies were ruled out as entrants into Japan (Weiner 1994: 118). This was in part due to escalation of job competition and racial tensions between indigenous people and Korean immigrants. The tensions were typified by the aftermath of 'Korean hunting' in the wake of the Kanto Great Earthquake in 1923, as is examined in a later section. Yet the criteria for the restrictions for entrants were always vague in the absence of coherent long-term policy concerning immigration (Weiner 1994: 121). On the other hand, when beginning to launch a war of invasion into China in 1931, Japan made Korea its army assembly area and exploited resources and labour power there, which caused a sharp increase in Korean migrants to Japan (Seo, K. 1997). Consequently, the Korean population in Japan continued to rise. It is estimated that the number of Korean residents in Japan was 799,878 in 1938, a significant increase from 129,870 in 1925 (cf. Mindan Online Community 2007). Those who arrived in Japan for economic reasons by 1939 supposedly came voluntarily. Yet most of them had no alternative but to enter Japan in order to escape death from starvation (Kajimura 1995: 139).

Many of these Koreans migrated to Japan through 'chain migration.' They were introduced to employers in Japan by relatives and acquaintances, while some entered through company recruitment (Weiner 1994: 56). 'Chain migration' often resulted in the concentration of Korean workers from the same town or village within a single factory (Weiner 1994: 56). Indeed the current population of Zainichi Koreans is concentrated in urban industrialised areas such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, Nagoya, Kawasaki and Kitakyushu (Ryang 1997: 3). During the colonial period, the majority of Korean immigrants were poorly educated illiterate farmers and agricultural workers with few marketable skills. After Korean migration began in 1910, Japanese society only offered Korean residents occupations characterised by low pay, dismal working conditions, lowest status, and job insecurity. These Koreans found employment in mining, railroad construction, and stevedoring (Lee and De Vos 1981b: 36). Due to their status as day-labourers their means of livelihood was precarious and they were exposed to the risk of unemployment. For instance, wage labourers working at coal mine sites in Hokkaido or Northern Kyushu were subject to seasonal fluctuation of work. Also, Korean labourers received smaller wages, sometimes little more than half that paid to Japanese in similar jobs (Lee and De Vos

1981b: 38).

As Japan invaded China in 1937, more than one million Japanese soldiers were sent to the Chinese front in 1938 (Seo, G. 1995). As a result, the labour shortage increased, and consequently, the National Manpower Mobilisation Act was extended to Korea in 1939. Under this act, approximately 38,700 Koreans were brought involuntarily to work for the economic expansion of Japan. After the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, Japan again faced an increasingly acute shortage of labour. In September, 1944, when the Japanese Imperial Diet (Parliament) passed the Korean Labour Conscription Act, all Korean males became subject to mobilisation by *fiat*, whether they lived in Japan proper or the Korean peninsula.

Under the new military conscription, many Koreans were forced to join military-related work in coal mines or arms manufacturing plants under extremely severe conditions. The conscription of forced Korean labour to Japan involved approximately 822,000 Koreans being brought to Japan as labour and military conscripts between 1939 and the defeat of Japan in 1945 (Lee and De Vos 1981b: 53). A great number of young Koreans were abducted and forced to get into trucks by Japanese policemen or powerful local figures in their villages (Katano 2010). Those Koreans were sent to mining and construction sites in rural areas and put in miserable conditions (Kim, C. 1995: 104-05). They were forced to engage in demanding and dangerous jobs. Some Korean workers were killed in accidents and others who attempted to escape were heavily beaten or killed by Japanese supervisors (Katano 2010). Moreover, a huge group of women from Japan's former colonial countries – possibly 200,000 – were rendered so-called ‘comfort women,’ or sex slaves for the Japanese military (Hein 1999). Apparently around 70 percent of the victims were Korean girls or women who were recruited by force or sometimes kidnapped from impoverished villages in Korea (cf. Nanumu no Ie Rekishikan Kouenkai 2002). When the war was over in 1945, there were approximately 2.4 million Koreans in Japan.

### III. Japanese Colonialism and Assimilation Policies

Under its colonial policies, Japan promoted the forced racial assimilation of Koreans on the Korean peninsula, which was part of *gaichi* (outside of Japan proper), as well as on the Japanese archipelago, *naichi* (Japan proper). After the annexation of Korea in 1910, Japan adopted so-called *budan seiji*, hard-line militarism and assimilation policy towards Koreans (Iguchi 1995). However, the assimilation policy could not destroy Koreans' ethnic self-determination and their desire for freedom, and the March First movement for Korean independence in 1919 occurred. Followed by the declaration of independence of Korea made by some religious groups, more than two million Koreans out of twenty million Korean residents in the Korean peninsula joined this movement throughout Korea. In this movement approximately 25,000 Koreans were injured or killed, and more than 27,000 were indicted due to their involvement in this movement (Onuma 2004; Chong 2010). After this movement, Japan announced *bunka seiji* (cultural rule), but it never made a shift from its brutal colonial policies to non-violent approaches; it attempted to enforce thoroughgoing assimilation (Iguchi 1995).

For the purpose of assimilation, the government suppressed Korean culture and language

through the *kōminka seisaku* (the policy of subordinating people to the Emperor) (Motani 2002: 229). This policy involved the slogans such as ‘*naisen ittai*’ (the united body of Korea and Japan), and *naisen yūwa* (the integration of Japan and Korea). These slogans stress the importance of doing away with antagonisms and achieving harmony between Japanese and Koreans by ‘Koreans’ cultural advancement’ (Kasuya 1992: 125, own translation). It implied that anyone who rebelled against imperial Japan and the Governor-General of Korea would be severely punished (Kasuya 1992: 125-126). Under the regulations of the *kōminka seisaku*, imperial Japan attempted to transform Koreans into loyal subjects of the emperor by conducting assimilation policies in all spheres of society, including education, religion, thoughts, and culture.

In order to eradicate the Korean culture and identity, the first Governor-General of Korea planned the spread of the colonial education. He issued the First Korean Education Act in 1911, which founded four-year public schools on the Korean peninsula (Harajiri 1998: 19). Korean children were rigidly forced to speak and to be taught Japanese in the classroom at school instead of their own language by the Third Korean Education Act enacted in 1936. The teaching curriculum was based on the *kominka* (subordinating to the emperor) education while the teaching of Korean language, history, and geography in schools was prohibited (Hester 2000: 176). Japanese was used as an official language in all media, such as official documents, publications, networks, and signboards outside of the schools as well (Mitsui 2007: 48).

Japan banned all Korean students, including elementary schoolchildren, from speaking Korean in order to completely extinguish the Korean language. If they spoke Korean, they were heavily punished (Jin 2010). As a result of compulsory use of Japanese, many Korean children became illiterate and were deprived of educational opportunity (Lee, W. 1995: 145-146). In 1943 and 1945 primary education became compulsory although the rate of school attendance of eligible children was less than 70 percent (Harajiri 1998: 19). The purpose of compulsory education was to prepare for military mobilisation (Lee, W. 1995: 147). Colonial education policy intended ‘to construct among Koreans identification with the Japanese state, while maintaining the structural inferiority of Koreans within the empire’ (Hester 2000: 176).

Moreover, the Japanese administration also aimed to destroy the Korean identity in terms of religion, cultural practice, and lifestyles. Koreans were required to visit *shintō* shrines for worship on a regular basis, which Japan constructed in all corners of the Korean peninsula. These shrines were dedicated to Emperor’s ancestors (Yamashiro and Kim, Yunguon 2003: 213). In addition to the imposed duty of frequent shrine visits, all Koreans irrespective of age or sex had to recite the ‘Charter Oath of Imperial Subjects’ on a regular basis. Koreans were also forced to give up their traditional *chogori* dress and wear Japanese-style clothes. According to one Korean female interviewee in Kim’s research (Kim, J. 2005: 6), Japanese police took a water gun filled with blue ink to shoot at people wearing *chogori* in Korea during Japan’s colonial era. She recalled her grandfather had been hit several times and had come back from the market in his white *chogori* covered with blue ink.

In addition to educational and religious assimilation, Koreans were mandated to adopt Japanese names. The *soshikaimei* programme, launched on 11 February 1940, required all Koreans to change their names to Japanese names and abandon their Korean names, both in

Japan proper and the Korean peninsula. If they did not adopt Japanese names, they were prohibited from finding jobs, receiving supplies ration, getting married, and obtaining travel permission (Katano 2010). Consequently, it is estimated that 78 percent of the population by mid-1940 had involuntarily adopted Japanese names (Katano 2010: 28).

Koreans became Japanese subjects and were promised equality with the Japanese under the Imperial rescript issued in the name of the Meiji Emperor. However, they were differentiated from the ethnic Japanese legally as *gaichi jin* (people outside of Japan proper) under the Family Registration Law (Kim, I. 1995: 199). Accordingly, they were excluded from legal protection and were subject to job discrimination, unlawful extortion, exploitation, and abuse (Kim, I. 1995: 200). After a male suffrage act was passed in 1925, Korean males in Japan became eligible to vote in Japanese elections. However, voter qualifications included a residence requirement of a full year, which prevented vast majority of Koreans from exercising the franchise (Lee and De Vos 1981b: 51). *Naisen ittai* (the united body of Japan and Korea), the slogan of Japan's colonial policy, was nothing more than subordination of Koreans to the emperor, mobilisation of Koreans and the extermination of Korean ethnicity. It never signified total equality (Iguchi 1995). Japan needed *kōminka seisaku* (the policy of subordinating colonial subjects to the Emperor) in order to incorporate colonial subjects into its national regiments as Japanese (Cho, K. 2003). Indeed, more than 200,000 Taiwanese people, who had been forced to receive a Japanese Imperial education, were sent to the battlegrounds and Japan's occupied territories, and more than 30,000 died in the war. They were drafted into the Japanese army as 'Japanese soldiers' and died as such (Goto 1992).

The most influential institution to conduct assimilation programmes was the *Kyōwakai* (Harmonisation Association), and the headquarters of the *Kyōwakai* was established in 1939 when the National Manpower Mobilisation Act was first enacted to bring Koreans into Japan (Kim, G. 2010: 55). The imperial government established branches of the *Kyōwakai* in all prefectures the Koreans lived. While the Welfare Ministry was in control of the *Kyōwakai* enterprises, the *Kyōwakai* branches in each prefecture were managed by the local police. That is, it was police officers that directly controlled and had authority over Koreans in their designations (Higuchi 1991). the *Kyōwakai* became an organisation to keep tabs on Zainichi Koreans' thoughts, implement the *kōminka*, and recruit and retain Korean wartime labourers (Seo, G 1995: 94). Thereafter the *Kyōwakai* exercised absolute control over all aspects of Koreans' lives in Japan (Weiner 1994: 203).

The *Kyōwakai* (renamed the Koseikai, Self-Improvement Association, in 1943) set its prime goal of *naisen yūwa* (the integration of Japanese and Koreans) and continued its activity until 1945 when Koreans were finally liberated. Official reasons given for the establishment of the *Kyōwakai* were to promote understanding between Japanese and Koreans, to raise living standards through social services, and to cultivate the trust and loyalty of Koreans (Lee and De Vos 1981b). Despite its goal of 'integration of Japanese and Koreans impartially and equally', in reality, the *Kyōwakai* was an instrument to impose 'racial assumptions, which justified and prolonged the subordination of Koreans' (Weiner 1994: 165). The main tasks performed by the *Kyōwakai* were: (1) law and order (making member lists, issuing the *Kyōwakai* membership

cards, and suppression and surveillance of Leftist Koreans and dissidents), (2) enforcement of *kominka seisaku* (implementation of Koreans' shrine visits, flag raising, money donation, speaking Japanese, adoption of Japanese names, and wearing Japanese clothing), (3) labour management of Korean workers (recruitment of Korean workers and conscription of forced labour), (4) military draft (recruitment of enlisted Korean soldiers and mobilisation of Koreans into military draft) and (5) the immigration control (enforcement of forced repatriation to Korea of Korean dissidents, the sick, and unemployed Koreans) (Higuchi 1991: 5).

All Korean residents were obliged to become members of the *Kyōwakai* and carry the *Kyōwakai* membership badges all the time. The membership card, issued by each *Kyōwakai* branch, was an identification badge with one's photo, and address written on it. Without possession of the badge, Koreans residents were subject to punishment as illegal immigrants. Moreover, this badge stated detailed personal information such as the amount of money they had donated for war efforts and the number of times they had performed shrine visits in order to monitor their thoughts. Another purpose of possession of this badge was to reduce desertions and labour turnover. Korean labourers were required to surrender their *Kyōwakai* membership badges to their employers until the expiration of the contract period (Weiner 1994: 204). The *Kyōwakai* helped the enforcement of coercive assimilation policies against Koreans in Japan. Viewed as subversive, Koreans in Japan were subject to control and surveillance (Kim, G. 2010b: 57). The purpose of the policies was to eradicate the existence of Koreans as a different social group (Higuchi 1991).

Being exposed to the immense pressure of assimilation, some Koreans residing in Japan set up secret ethnic activities. They ran small private schools, which ostensibly taught children some subjects, such as mathematics and Japanese, but in actuality taught Korean children the Korean language, songs, and history. These small private schools were formed throughout Japan, and some Korean children established a Korean ethnic identity, which supported their ethnic pride and independence. Their resistance movement represented in these small private schools served as the driving force for the establishment of Koreans' ethnic education after liberation (Lee, W. 1995).

#### **IV. Racial Violence: the Kanto Earthquake and Korean Massacres**

It was in the wake of the Kanto Earthquake in 1923 that the Japanese hatred against and fear of Koreans in Japan came to the surface, resulting in the Korean massacre. On 1 September 1923 the Great Kanto Earthquake struck the Kanto area (Tokyo and the surrounding area). The earthquake either damaged or destroyed nearly 90 percent of the housing in Yokohama (Weiner 1994: 79). The earthquake and subsequent fire killed more than 140,000 people in total, with millions more left homeless. When many people were thrown into a panic, several unfounded rumours and reports spread. The rumours had it that Koreans were rioting against the Imperial Army, setting fires, raping Japanese women and killing Japanese people throughout the Kanto area. Although the rumours were unfounded, newspapers reported them and wrote that a Korean riot had been prepared after 2 September when a big rally was planned for the independence of

Korea (Lee and De Vos 1981a: 22). The government made no attempt to discourage the dissemination of further rumours (Weiner 1994: 79). On the contrary, they believed the rumours and enforced a martial law to contain the reported disturbances in the Kanto area. While police was ordered to control the supposed rioting, the Japanese were advised to remain vigilant.

The Japanese formed vigilante groups, *Jikeidan*, in approximately 3,600 sites in the Kanto region after the earthquake (Katano 2010). Regional police stations in each prefecture provided arms, such as guns and swords, to the groups and approved of their killing Koreans (Kang 1975). On finding any Koreans, the citizens and members of *Jikeidan* killed them immediately. Many Koreans were stabbed to death or had their arms chopped off, while many women were also killed, their sexual organs cut out, and legs torn off (Lee and De Vos 1981a: 23). Language was used as the criteria to determine Koreans; They were made to pronounce some complicated Japanese sentences by members of a *Jikeidan*. If their pronunciation was not fluent enough to be indigenous Japanese, they were killed on the spot. A mass murder and torture of Koreans occurred even on the premises of the police headquarters (Ryang 2003: 735). The police had little inclination to stop the mob. The Korean massacre in the aftermath of the earthquake lasted for six days and nights. It was not only Koreans but also a sizable number of Japanese Leftists that were seized by the police and executed. For instance, In Kameido police station in Tokyo, nine socialists were killed together with three hundred Koreans (Lee and De Vos 1981a: 26). Japanese officials conjured up images of a combined Leftist and Korean plot (Hicks 1997: 48-49). The Japanese officials and police, who had grappled with thorny issues of Japanese leftists and anarchists as well as Korean activists of the pro-independent movement, took advantage of the earthquake.

With only a few exceptions, most of the Japanese press accepted the government's attitude of indifference to the suffering of Koreans and failed to unravel the truth. No one kept track of the precise number of the Koreans murdered in the series of the bloodbaths. The government asserted that it was fewer than 250, whereas an academic, Yoshino Sakuzō, who was a long-standing opponent of Japan's colonial policies, estimated that the number of Korean victims was approximately 2,600 (Weiner 1994: 84-85). Other researchers estimate that the number of Korean victims was more than 6,000 (Lee and De Vos 1981a: 27). Yet the exact number is still uncertain because Imperial Japan and government officials concealed the remains of the Korean victims (Yamada 2010). In the trials of *jikeidan* member, a total of 160 individuals were prosecuted, and forty-seven received sentences with a maximum sentence of four years imprisonment. However, virtually all of those convicted were released from prison within a year (Weiner 1994: 83).

## ***V. The Rise of Nationalism and Construction of Japanese Racial Identity***

Before Meiji restoration in 1868, Japanese nationalism, or the notion of Japan as a distinctive community based on the rhetoric of 'Japanese blood,' had yet to be established. These ideas were not implanted and propagated among the general population. People rather had local allegiances, because the administrative system was conducted in each local clan (*han*). Since there was no mass schooling and mass media in the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), the vast majority of the



population ‘did not identify themselves beyond their village or their domain (*han*)’ (Lie 2001: 117).

Notwithstanding, many intellectuals and academics supported the establishment of Japan as a modern nation state. To evoke collective sentiments across the country, the Japanese government managed to generate a great number of symbolic images in racial discourse. For instance, in 1915 and 1929, the Japanese colonial government held grand Korean Expositions in the Korean peninsula, which introduced an ‘old’ and ‘stagnant’ Korea in contrast to ‘new’ and ‘modern’ Japan (Kal 2005). Numerous publications argued a biological or genetic basis for the distinctiveness and superiority of the Japanese ‘race’ and mature culture throughout the 1920s and early 1930s (Weiner 1997: 99). In contrast, many imperialist observers and advocates of Japanese expansion in Asia suggested Korea would not be able to successfully modernise because of its racial/biological inferiority.

Japan used industrial and technological achievements as indices of civilisation and enlightenment in order to invade and occupy the countries in East Asia during the Asia-Pacific War (Weiner 1997: 112). The invaded countries were regarded as being an inferior status because of their lack of material development (Weiner 1997: 112). Japan legitimised its own colonialism by asserting that an *advanced* Japan had responsibilities and obligations to lead and enlighten an *underdeveloped* Korea (Iguchi 1995: 62). In the context of colonial expansion in Korea and China, Japan assumed that ‘the differences in economic and political capacities of the peoples of East Asia were the result of natural or biological laws’ (Dikkötter 1997: 7), stressing the contrasting image of itself as racially superior with that of ‘others’ as primitive, savage and inferior. In this process, colonial policy and theory of the nation reinforced Japanese conceptualisations of racial difference between themselves and other Asians (Young 1997: 161). A contemporary Zainichi Korean writer, Yan Sogil, points out that Japan, which had possessed an indelible inferiority complex toward Western countries, sought to fill the gap by having an ardent sense of self-glorification and racial superiority over Asians (Yan 2004: 4). Japan’s sense of superiority over Asians was a mirror image of its complex attitudes towards the West.

A clear racial boundary between ‘us’ Japanese and ‘them’ savages was gradually formed. ‘Japanese blood’ is socially invented to mould and channel psychological responses concerning ‘we’-ness and ‘them’-ness (Yoshino 1997: 202). The idea of Japanese homogeneity was disseminated among the general public through publications and education. As Weiner argues, the relationship between political discourse and a familial ideology was elastic and reciprocal, and respect for the ‘traditional’ family and way of life maintained political, social, economic and cultural authority (Weiner 1994: 210). The intellectual masterminds such as government officials, journalists, and academics mostly succeeded in manipulating a populace to strengthen the bond of national solidarity for the war and territorial expansion through the discourse of the *kazoku kokka* and ‘Japanese homogeneity’. Through this discourse, Koreans were rendered ‘inferior others’ and excluded from the mainstream of Japan, and at the same time they were incorporated as ‘the enemy within’ (Weiner 1994).

## VI. Conclusion

This paper examined the process of Japan's territorial expansion in Asia and annexation of Korea. In the wake of the invasion of Asia from Western powers in the mid-nineteenth century, Japan was forced to open up itself to the world after two-hundred year period of national isolation. Encountering the West, Japan began to change its domestic politics and foreign policies. It managed to develop strong military power and establish a modern economic and political system. Thus it reformed regulations such as the introduction of compulsory education and military conscription. In the course of Japanese modernisation and due to the success of these reforms, Japan began to recognise itself to be a new leader in Asia.

Furthermore, this paper explored the dawn of the Korean presence in Japan and assimilation policies towards them. After Japan annexed Korea in 1910, enormous number of Korean farmers lost their farm lands, and consequently many of them were destined for Japan proper to make a living. In the midst of the rapid industrial expansion after the First World War, Japanese industrialists recruited these impoverished Korean farmers as a cheap labour. In spite of their lowest status and job insecurity, the increase of Koreans' presence escalated job competition and racial tensions between indigenous people and Korean immigrants. The tensions were typified by the aftermath of 'Korean hunting' in the wake of the Kanto Great Earthquake in 1923. Moreover, between 1939 and the defeat of Japan in 1945 the conscription of forced Korea labour brought approximately 822,000 Koreans to Japan involuntarily. They were forced to engage in demanding and dangerous jobs, and some of them were killed in accidents or by Japanese supervisors.

Under the colonial policies, the Japanese colonial government suppressed Korean culture and language. They were forced to adopt Japanese lifestyles and Japanese names. Koreans became Japanese subjects and were promised equality with the Japanese, but they were both legally and socially differentiated from the ethnic Japanese. The idea of Japan as a pure and homogeneous nation played an integral part in the formation of the racial discourse of the Japanese 'superior race.' In the discourse of 'savage and civilisation' and the rhetoric of *naisen ittai*, the government justified its socio-economic exploitation and subjugation of East Asian people including Koreans.

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