

Since then, over a span of three quarters of a century, Japan has shifted its shape as an object of research and as an ethnographic field of anthropological inquiry. In this article, I explore the case of Japan as a potentially very effective field of inquiry vis-à-vis a globalizing world in which nation-state entities continue to dominate, now equipped with global apparatuses and sophisticated transnational governing and surveillance technologies. As I shall argue below, against the backdrop of globalization on the one hand and the normalizing state on the other, what seems at a glance an old-fashioned and essentialist approach to Japan—an approach focused on Japan as a nation in unison with its culture—can offer a useful reference in thinking about how the Japanese state regulates and normalizes its society—that is, if such an approach is utilized critically. An approach that thinks about the nation-state anthropologically is somehow urgent in this age of biopower, given that a focus on the level of the nation-state has been somewhat lacking in anthropology.

In pursuing this approach in a critical manner, in this article, in parallel to the national anthropology of Japan, I explore the figure of “the Korean in Japan” during the last one hundred years. This “Korean” is not a concrete, singular individual, but rather a generalized figure whose positionality or, shall we say, “slot,” as in the “savage slot” by Rolph Trouillot, matters more (Trouillot 2003 Ch.1; see also the Introduction in this issue). I shall argue that the anthropological study of Japan, with its long-term approach focusing on culture at the level of the nation, when combined with this figure, the Korean, offers a useful frame for building upon national anthropology through the addition of a new conceptual tool—biopower.

I have elsewhere published my views on the anthropology of Japan, and the first half of this article (sections 1 through 3) heavily relies on that work, as anyone familiar with my previous work will see (Ryang 2004). The second half of

this article (the remainder, beginning with section 4) further builds upon it. The connection between these parts may not be obvious, but the second part can be fully understood only when we remember the manner in which Japan was approached as a national entity in Anglophone anthropology. As such, this article is meant to be a polemic, demonstrating that Japan's national anthropology effectively erased Koreans (and by extension, non-mainstream Japanese) from the anthropological study of Japan while creating a separate category of study, as in the case of the anthropology of Koreans in Japan, for example, effectively maintaining the national cultural frame in the anthropological study of Japan, basically replicating a segregation between the (mainstream) Japanese and non(mainstream)-Japanese populations. In this sense, anthropology was complicit in erasing the colonial trace that ran through postwar Japan.

1. Wartime Enemy Studies

The first ethnographic study of Japan by a Western anthropologist schooled in the disciplinary conventions and techniques of anthropology was *Suye Mura, A Japanese Village* by John Embree (Embree 1939). Embree's account of village life in southwestern Japan, documenting local events, almanacs, and family relations, was an illuminating first study. Although it left much wanting, it fulfilled the purpose of furnishing the Anglophone anthropological corpus with its first standard ethnographic work on Japan. A depiction of mundane village life in Japan proved to be of little use, however, once the Pacific War started. This was not so much because of the quality of Embree's work, but more because of an unequivocal shift in how Japan was perceived – from a site of ethnographic fieldwork to an enemy nation and a formidable one at that. The Office of War

Information (OWI) now had to embark on a full-scale study of Japan as a wartime enemy, its objective now clear and non-negotiable, encapsulated in the following question: How can we defeat Japan? For this reason, the traditional approach to anthropology practiced by Embree, whose study incorporated a detailed analysis of a specific local community, was superseded by concern about the broader national culture of Japan and the characteristics of the Japanese as a whole.

A number of social scientists were deployed in an effort to study and understand Japan, which quickly became not only simply an enemy, but also a racial other. Wartime propaganda is replete with depictions of the Japanese as evil on the one hand and as a racially inferior species on the other, the survival of which would mean the death of America (Dower 1986, 1993). Against this image, it is understandable that attempts were made to find a quick fix that would explain the widespread atrocities and premeditated acts of extreme violence perpetrated by Japanese soldiers throughout continental Asia and the Pacific. One anthropologist charged to study Japan, Geoffrey Gorer, for example, concluded that the cruel behavior of the Japanese soldiers on the battleground could be attributed to the effects of the strict toilet training that they had been subjected to during infancy (Gorer 1942, 1943).

Gorer, a British national who had had to return to Britain, was instrumental in having Ruth Benedict replace him in the OWI. Benedict, whose earlier work arguing that African Americans in the South were no less smart than whites led to her being labeled a communist, rendering her ineligible for roles requiring top-ranking security clearance, had no prior experience working on Japanese culture (Benedict 1934, 1940 for her earlier work). Benedict carried out much of her research and writing at her sister's family home in Pasadena, California, and her book on Japan, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, actually

ended up being published after the war, which turned out to be an example of remarkable historical timing (Benedict 1946). The book would become the go-to guide to Japanese culture during the seven-year Allied Occupation of Japan, which began in 1945. It would also become, via something of a collateral effect, the textbook that taught the Japanese public about their own culture.

For a book the bulk of which had been written in the midst of the war against Japan, *Chrysanthemum* was extremely levelheaded, yet remained penetrating in its analysis. It was not free from a tendency to make hasty connections between superficial data and the supposed core of a typical personality produced by a given culture. This reflected a common approach among scholars of the Culture and Personality School that occupied a dominant and influential position in US anthropology during this period, and of which Benedict was one of the leading practitioners (see below). However, the book did endeavor to explain why Japanese soldiers resorted to extreme measures during times of war, arguing that their purpose was to demonstrate their loyalty to the Emperor, their behavior not transactional in nature, but instead reflecting a deeply committed feeling of indebtedness. Based on the concentric as well as hierarchical social relations that a Japanese (male) child is introduced into, Benedict explained that values such as the eternal *on* or indebtedness that permeates society, as well as a tendency to emphasize shame rather than guilt, provided a basis for interpreting aspects of Japanese behavior based on the logic inherent to Japanese culture. According to this approach, actions which may have initially appeared irrational could be viewed instead as reasonable and necessary outcomes of the value system the Japanese were immersed in. Here, the hierarchy was the key to understanding Japanese culture, bearing profound inner meaning. Helped by the state-crafted and state-enforced belief system, according to which the Emperor was enshrined as a mythical figure, this sense of

gratitude and indebtedness mixed with awe sustained the social and familial hierarchy with resilience; it was through hierarchical behavior that the Japanese expressed their respect to their elders, superiors, and, ultimately, to the Emperor (Benedict 1946: Ch.5).

The fact that Japan entered American anthropology as a national enemy of the US whose national culture the Americans needed to understand in order to defeat it positioned the nation at a peculiar angle from the outset. As can be seen, *Chrysanthemum*, unlike *Suye Mura*, was an attempt to explain the Japanese nation and its culture, rather than the practices found in a particular farming village in a specific location within that nation. When it came to such a mission, the Culture and Personality School was particularly well-positioned. The Culture and Personality School was led by the founding father of Columbia University's anthropology program, Franz Boas, his famous students including Benedict's long-term colleague and partner, Margaret Mead (Lapsley 2001). The fundamental premise of this school was that each culture contained its own core logic, its own set of practices and cosmology, and that these produced discernible patterns, these patterns in turn generating a personality type unique to that culture. In this approach, behavioral patterns during childhood were accorded particular significance, viewed as holding the key to a generalizable understanding of a given culture with the assumption of a sustained correlation between culture and personality (e.g., Mead 1928). According to this reasoning, knowledge of a culture's unique personality type would permit one to understand how a mind created by that culture would work (see King 2019).

The challenge, however, was unmistakable: Could one directly transfer a set of methods utilized to study a small-scale society, such as that of the Samoan teenagers that Mead had studied, to a study of a complex entity, such as an industrialized nation? Notwithstanding such a challenge, as Cold War tensions

quickly intensified following WWII, the Culture and Personality School came to be known as the study of culture at a distance. Its approach proved to be quite useful at the time, for example, in attempting to make sense of Soviet behavior, and was avidly deployed to produce knowledge on national character (see Mead and Métraux 2000). This meant that, from early on, postwar anthropological studies of specific local areas of Japan came to be burdened with a national frame of reference, aspects of local and regional cultures and small-scale communities in Japan being measured against national-cultural attributes.

2. Anthropology During the Occupation

Vexed after their humiliating and devastating defeat at war, and facing a new era of nation (re-)building under the Allied Occupation (1945-1952), the Japanese found themselves viewing their Emperor, now declared a mere mortal, just like everyone else. References to him as the national deity disappeared from all levels of education, and all public rituals involving his worship were eliminated from the daily lives of ordinary Japanese. Meanwhile, the country faced an unimaginable level of economic devastation in the aftermath of the war, a number of its major cities, including atomic bomb targets Hiroshima and Nagasaki, now reduced to ruins. From these ruins, with the wartime victors occupying their country right in front of their eyes, the Japanese now faced a need to understand themselves anew.

This endeavor of national self-understanding took diverse directions. While there was growing support in some quarters for newly popular leftist ideologies, including communism and socialism, others asserted freedom of thought and formed new political, religious, and cult organizations, practices

which had been prohibited under the previous military government. All of these developments took place under the foreign military occupation, the Japanese being reminded daily that they were a vanquished people and were now at the mercy of foreign others as they attempted to re-launch their nationhood.

Ironically—or perhaps wholly understandably in retrospect—it was Benedict's *Chrysanthemum* that coached the Japanese, so to say, in national self-understanding. While the book served the Occupation personnel as a guidebook to help them understand the basic ethos of Japanese society, more importantly, it gave war-defeated Japanese intellectuals as well as public clues to help them understand what had led such devastation to befall their nation. Thus, notions that Benedict presented and explained as patterns of Japanese culture (as the book's subtitle goes), such as hierarchical human relations, came to carry the native coinage of Japanese self-understanding. Understandably, Japanese intellectuals and the Japanese public at large reflected upon *Chrysanthemum* as a basis for self-criticism (e.g., Maruyama 1961; see Lummis 2007).

This process went hand in hand with what I have previously called Occupation anthropology, whereby Western (mainly American) anthropologists now conducted on-the-ground fieldwork among the Japanese in rural and urban communities (see Ryang 2004). Here, too, hierarchy was taken as an a priori point of departure for any inquiry, yet the Occupation anthropologists, rightly and unlike Benedict, paid attention to the wealth of existing anthropological and historical studies of Japan by Japanese scholars, and were not oblivious to diverse examples of local and regional social organization, especially in areas such as kinship relations and household structure.

An important methodological difference between wartime enemy studies and Occupation anthropology was that the latter took place in concrete locations where researchers could now empirically observe and constantly interact with

the natives. Why, then, one might ask, did Occupation anthropology continue to take *Chrysanthemum* as a point of reference, inquiring into Japan's national cultural pattern and typical personality even when studying local cultures and institutions? A representative example would be *Village Japan* by R.K. Beardsley, J.W. Hall, and R.E. Ward (Beardsley, Hall, and Ward 1959). Based on field data collected during the Occupation period, the authors presented a detailed and comprehensive study of a rural farming community in southwestern Japan which, the authors clarified, practiced very different kinship relations to the northeastern communities of the archipelago. The village, just as Benedict had stressed, was organized hierarchically, but not as rigidly as was the case in the northeastern communities; powerful lineages dominated village life, both in terms of political decision-making as well as economic operations. Yet, the book was presented as a study in Japan's rural culture, bearing Japanese national characteristics.

An urban counterpart to *Village Japan* was *Japanese Factory* by J.C. Abbeglen, which documented family-like or kin-like organizational structures in Japanese manufacturing workplaces, a striking contrast to the American model, where family relations and business relations typically did not mix. Here, too, parent-like figures called *oyabun* and child-like underlings called *kobun* worked together in hierarchical relationships, willingly preserving differences in rank. Again, these were presented as distinctly Japanese national characteristics (Abbeglen 1958). Thus, even though the wartime enemy studies were no longer practiced, the national anthropology of Japan was far from over; on the contrary, it had only just begun, as ethnographic studies of Japan would customarily make reference to Japanese national culture (and *Chrysanthemum* more specifically) as a constant element, even though the nature of ethnographic field sites that

researchers were dealing with became increasingly disparate and volatile, reflecting Japan's changing economy and society (e.g. Plath 1964; Vogel 1963).

3. The *Ie* Society

As Japan rapidly entered an era of high growth, riding an economic boom created by the Korean War and then the Vietnam War on the one hand, and enjoying US protection in exchange for abandoning Okinawa for American military use on the other, the world, as well as the Japanese themselves, began to notice that, despite its rapid modernization, Japan, culturally, was not Westernized: Its workers worked long hours and six-day weeks without demanding long paid leave or vacation; its students crammed for university entrance examinations; its women wanted to become full-time housewives, even after completing college educations—altogether different cultural scenes from the Western industrialized nations. The breathtaking speed of Japan's economic growth was undeniable: Its manufacturing production index soared from 340 in 1945 to reach 8,143 in 1965, while that of the US in 1965 was 1,227 (Ishida 1971: 2). An inquiry began into how Japan had managed to achieve remarkable economic growth while maintaining a relatively peaceful social order (save for the activities of a few radicalized groups) *and* remaining culturally "Japanese," its stable lifestyle supported by hard-working citizens with an impeccable work ethic. The answer to Japan's post-1970s prosperity was sought in Japan's national character, now (unlike during the war time) viewed as a positive factor, Japan itself at times actively encouraging the rest of the world to modify its own practices under catch-all phrases such as "Japanese-style business management."

What caught observers' attention was that even though Japan was rapidly achieving Western levels of economic power, its lifestyle, family relations, and above all, work relations remained different, non-Western, and indeed, Japanese and more specifically, hierarchical, rather than aspiring for egalitarian social order. It was at this juncture that Chie Nakane's intellectual coup-de-force gripped the world. One of the first handful of female students to be educated at the University of Tokyo, Nakane's original ethnographic research was based on fieldwork conducted in India. Comparing Japan to India, another Asian nation, Nakane asserted that a Japan-vs.-the world comparison made more sense than an East-vs.-West one, her approach incorporating a premise that Japanese culture was unique and distinct from those found elsewhere in the world. Published in 1970, Nakane's *Japanese Society* was enormously influential, seen as a must-read for those involved in Anglophone college-level teaching and research on Japan (Nakane 1970).

According to Nakane, Japanese society is hierarchically organized in unique ways, with workplace relations mimicking those of the household or *ie*, thereby rendering the work unit into a similar entity as the family unit, in which top-down protection by the leader is reciprocated with bottom-up loyalty from subordinates, together harmoniously striving to achieve common goals—just as any good family would do. Evidently, what *Chrysanthemum* presented as the cause of Japan's wartime radical behavior, as in the case of the extreme and total loyalty for the Emperor by Japan's soldiers, was viewed by Nakane as a positive influence on the Japanese work ethic. According to her inverted V model, groups are maintained via the links that subordinates maintains with the superior located above them with the tip of the inverted V branching out to take care of multiple sub-units. Horizontal relationships between groups are not important, and what unifies the groups internally is the quality of the typical Japanese

leader, who is, according to Nakane, characterized as a good listener and as someone who works the hardest in the group (Nakane 1970: 57; 63ff.).

Structurally, Nakane highlights the lifetime employment system of the Japanese corporation, which provides allowances for dependents, healthcare cover, security, and long-term benefits, sometimes even paying for the tuition fees of employees' children. Employees, in turn, remain faithful to their employer and devote themselves to the prosperity of the company, creating a situation in which "members of a trade union [...] are too loyal to their own company to join forces with their brothers in other company unions" (Nakane 1970: 149).

The hierarchy or vertical relationship that dominates Japanese society is not one-directional, asserts Nakane; it consists just as much of top-down protection as it does of bottom-up loyalty, and using terms such as exploitation, coercion, or oppression to describe the Japanese-style hierarchy would completely miss the point. The best name for this type of hierarchical-yet-egalitarian society is found in the kinship idiom, *ie* (household). Nakane writes: "The essence of this firmly rooted, latent group consciousness in Japanese society is expressed in the traditional and ubiquitous concept of *ie*, the household, a concept which penetrates every nook and cranny of the Japanese society" (Nakane 1971: 4). Expressing skepticism about the assumption that the modernization of Japan's economy would lead to the demise of its traditional hierarchy, she argued, to the contrary, that the nation's modernization and strong economy had been made possible precisely because of (and not despite) the existence of the traditional household-like hierarchy, the *ie* principle that is part of the essence of Japanese society.

Nakane's book marked the summation of a postwar process of self-inquiry in which the Japanese asked themselves who they were and how their culture had come to be what it was. Following the publication of Nakane's book,

the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the production of a huge inventory of Japanese books written about Japanese national culture from the perspective of *ie*. Such a trend had a direct influence on Anglophone studies of Japan in general and the anthropology of Japan in particular. The large cluster of discourse discussing and exploring the essence of the Japanese people and culture was generally referred to as *nihonjinron*, a term conventionally translated as the Japanese cultural uniqueness thesis or studies of Japanese cultural uniqueness (Directly translated, *nihonjinron* means thesis on the Japanese people). That which had to be rescued by Benedict was now turned into something that was triumphantly explained by Nakane and many others who looked to the positive and productive aspects of Japanese culture, connected these to Japan's postwar economic achievements, and attributed them to the nation's cultural uniqueness, including elements such as the *ie* principle, the case which Ezra Vogel presented as a lesson for America (Vogel 1979).

If Benedict explained the logic behind the actions of the kamikaze suicide bombers by linking them to their loyalty to the Emperor and a deep-seated sense of indebtedness, Nakane argued that Japanese workers were too loyal to their employers to forge intra-company labor union ties, and that they worked so hard because their companies took good care of them and their families, just like parents would take care of children in a household. In this depiction, harmony rather than disagreement, homogeneity rather than diversity, and conformity rather than dissent became the core aspects of a national cultural framework. Significantly, these were no longer negative characteristics that the Japanese had to defend, but instead positive characteristics that were seen as having enabled Japan to emerge from the ashes of the devastation of WWII to become the leading economy of the world.

4. The Anthropology of Biopower

Understandably, the early to mid-1990s saw the appearance of further examples of work on Japan that took Japan as a national whole when thinking about its culture. Even in cases where the research was firmly rooted in concrete and long-term fieldwork, the concept of Japaneseness as national essence continued to act as a reference point, both critically and affirmatively, the notion of *ie* continuing to frame inquiry, again both as an object of deconstruction as well as a tool to be used in the further construction of Japaneseness (e.g. Ohnuki-Tierney 1993; Hendry 1993; Kondo 1990). By the turn of the century, however, this tendency toward affirmative assertions of Japanese national character had largely subsided. This was both a reflection of a process of critical correction and reflexive examination of *nihonjinron* and its essentialism on the one hand, and of the changing reality of Japan's economy on the other. Japan had slid from a leadership position among the world's economic powers to that of a nation unable to pull itself out of chronic recession, turning the majority of workforce into contract workers rather than life-time employees, while the meteoric rise of China as a phenomenal economic power shifted the balance of power—and therefore, the balance of focus in academic research in the West—from Japan to China. The intensely diversifying and globalizing world also made national-character studies appear increasingly out-of-step with reality, and even Japan, traditionally very reluctant to accept refugees and immigrants, saw the permeation of diverse peoples into its workplaces, universities, and neighborhoods.

Today, more works on Japan's ethnic, racial, and sexual minorities, among others, are being published by anthropologists. Accordingly, the essentialistic

assumption of Japanese cultural uniqueness no longer holds its dazzling sway over Western anthropology. This development can be seen in the large number of works studying ethnic minorities, women's rights, sexual diversity, disability, and marginalized cultures, as well as institutions addressing non-mainstream issues and local and regional organizations that are distinct from Japan's assumed national whole (e.g., Ryang 1997; Borovoy 2005; Nakamura 2017, and dozens more). I must add that, in retrospect, the publication of a vast number of works relating to Japan's ethnic, cultural, and medical minorities, as well as regional (as opposed to national) uniqueness, was in large part the product of a counterargument against the *nihonjinron* thesis that had presented Japan as a harmonious and peaceful whole. Needless to say, postwar Japan has never been as harmonious or as peaceful as the proponents of the *nihonjinron* discourse tried to portray it. Nakane may have found the *ie* structure in "every nook and cranny" of Japanese society, but we can find examples of discrimination, injustice, inequality and disparity – whether they be based on ethnicity, gender, economic circumstances, or educational opportunity – in every nook and cranny of Japan as well.

So, is the national anthropology of Japan done with? I propose otherwise, as the question remains: Even though works focusing on non-mainstream enclaves and communities of Japan have appeared, have they widely engaged in critique of the anthropological study of Japan as a national entity? Furthermore, and in slight contradiction with the above, I suggest that the tradition of a national anthropology of Japan offers a potentially powerful starting-point for opening up a new avenue of anthropological inquiry into Japan. This is related to the global phenomenon whereby populations are being regulated and managed in an increasingly intensive manner by state apparatuses and government agencies via increasingly sophisticated surveillance, demographic technology,

and data-collection pertaining to birth, death, morbidity and health, and micro-monitoring technologies that penetrate into every wrinkle and flow of our thoughts, habits, and personal tastes; that is to say, the techniques and mechanisms of biopower. At this juncture, an effort to think (again) about Japan as a nation-state entity using anthropological tools can be an illuminating exercise, and I intend to demonstrate this by referring to a generalized member of a certain population group in Japan, the figure of the Korean. We shall see that the national anthropology of Japan enables us to grasp the Koreans in Japan anthropologically in close and ongoing connection to the Japanese Empire, and then the postwar Japanese state, rather than presenting them as some kind of remote ethnographic community removed from the nation-state only because they are marginalized and/or non-Japanese.

This exercise is important in my view because, even though Japan-related anthropology no longer displays a primary focus on an assumed Japanese national culture, instead moving on to look at small-scale enclaves, diasporic communities, occupational groups, and other more discrete entities within as well as around the nation, this shift has been made in a somewhat uncritical manner; that is to say, the critical overcoming of national anthropology has not gone through a thorough process. For example, where were the Koreans when Japan was deemed as an *ie* (household) society? Did the Koreans belong within Japanese society at all? If so, how, and if not, why not? These questions have not been asked, while this population's exclusion from the Japanese national sphere has simply been assumed or reasoned based on its members' lack of Japanese nationality. My question is not concerned with whether or not Koreans in Japan were culturally assimilated into Japan's mainstream or whether or not they lived in Japanese neighborhoods rather than ethnically segregated ones. Rather, my

question is about the location of the Korean vis-à-vis the national anthropology of Japan. To pursue this question, the concept of biopower is crucial.

Let us, therefore, first briefly confirm how and what we understand biopower to be. Michel Foucault marks the second half of eighteenth-century Europe as the period when “the stakes of political strategies [became] the life of the human species, thereby making a society’s ‘threshold of biological modernity’” (Foucault 1978: 143). What he means is that, from around this time, a shift in the focus of power took place. While individual bodies had previously been subjected to disciplinary power of the sovereign, the human species now became the focus of a new type of power—biopower—that began to deploy a set of new technologies and techniques, not only to discipline, but also to manage and regulate people as populations. Rather than individually being subjected to the sovereign’s power to kill, the population as a whole came to be subjected to the apparatuses of the modern state, including taxation, conscription, the collection of medical records and statistics, standardized mass education, traffic control and mass transportation—and, while Foucault does not clarify this point, this power is rooted in the boundaries of the nation-state. Thus, humans (now citizens) were subjects that exercised democratic national sovereignty while simultaneously being objects of regulation, management, and control as the state worked toward the creation of an increasingly efficient and standardized society.

Foucault, however, does not place sovereign power and biopower in chronological sequence; they permeate each other, even though they may not exist on the same level, and they can function simultaneously, as biopower utilizes new mechanisms that intervene with life on the level of generality, including statistical estimates and forecasts (Foucault 2003: 250; see also Genel 2006). It is here that a dangerous undercurrent within the mechanism of the modern state manifests—in racism. According to Foucault: “The juxtaposition

of—or the way biopower functions through—the old sovereign power of life and death implies the workings, the introduction and activation of, racism” (Foucault 2003: 258). Racism is a way of “establishing a biological type caesura within a population that appears to be a biological domain” (Foucault 2003: 255). Such a mechanism manifests in colonialism, war, military occupation, immigration policies, policing, all the way down to more mundane and seemingly innocuous policies, such as mortgage lending, zoning, or college recruitment, for example. But, in hostile conflict, the killing of the other (of members of a race other than one’s own) becomes a biological necessity—the more you kill the other, the more likely you will survive and thrive. This is the logic of war: Not only one’s survival, but also one’s prosperity in posterity, depend on the killing of the other. In contrast with the premodern kingdom, where the power to kill was reserved for the sovereign, here, sovereign power is unleashed among the general population, the power to kill now being shared in the very social body from which the ranks of the soldiers would be filled. Nazi society, Foucault continues, was the most murderous, the power to take life “granted not only to the State but to a whole series of individuals, to a considerable number of people (such as the SA, the SS, and so on)” (Foucault 2003: 259).

It is useful to refer here to what Giorgio Agamben proposes as a compliment or corrective to Foucault’s biopower. Agamben is interested in times of national crisis and the way in which such crises reveal those humans not counted in the main national population, those he calls *homo sacer* (Agamben 1995). The existence of *homo sacer*, or killable life—life that is at once sacred yet accursed, life that cannot be sacrificed but only killed—is closely connected to the nature of modern democracy. According to Katina Genel’s summary, Agamben views that: “The specificity of modern democracy, differentiated from the democracy of antiquity is the fact that it approaches its opposite, totalitarianism”

(Genel 2006: 53). Agamben's focus is thus on the aporia of the modern, or, more precisely, *national* democracy, and this manifests most vividly in times of crisis through the figure of the refugee, who has no nationality or citizenship and, on that basis, is deemed as having no human rights, being "invariably in a worse position than enemy aliens" (Arendt 1973: 294). Agamben goes on to explore the camp where, inhabited by bare life, the state of exception becomes a stable rule or the norm (Agamben 1999).

Given the anthropological tradition of focusing on small-scale societies or communities and building the analysis in a bottom-up fashion, connecting a study of a local community to a critique of world-historical and global issues, biopower may not at a first glance be very suited or at least readily applicable to subject matters of this discipline. However, when it comes to the anthropological study of Japan, because of Western anthropology's sustained references to the national cultural characteristics of Japan and the Japanese, we have relatively advantageous conditions from which to embark on anthropological inquiry concerning biopower and how it works in Japan. If we take the century as our unit of measurement, observing how the technique of power shifts from sovereign power to biopower, we begin to see a very interesting case in Japan—through the figure of the Korean. We focus firstly on the Korean in the Japanese Empire and, later, the Japanese nation-state, following Agamben's notion of bare life or *homo sacer*, since it is the way in which Koreans have been treated as a population during the last one hundred years by the mechanisms and technologies of the Japanese state as biopower that helps us understand Japan as biopower. The figure of the Korean will show us the shifting reconfiguration between the sovereign power of the Imperial state and the biopower of the postwar (supposedly democratic) Japanese state, a constitutional monarchy.

5. The Korean—A Bare Life



Figure 1. "A Korean escaping into the potato field" A Drawing by Yamasaki Tsuyoshi, a fourth grader, recollecting the mob violence against a Korean man after the earthquake. Stored in Tokyo Metropolitan Government Memorial Hall. Photo courtesy of [Korai Museum](#).

About one hundred years ago, in 1923, a massive earthquake occurred in Tokyo and surrounding areas. This event took place thirteen years after the annexation of Korea by Japan. At that time, it was said that about twenty thousand Koreans resided in the greater Tokyo area—mainly as seasonal migrant workers. Koreans were, as an outcome of the colonization, Japanese, in that their journey across the Japan Strait from the peninsula to the archipelago was seen as domestic travel, even though there was a rather clear administrative divide between the metropolis and the colonies, which included both Korea and Taiwan.

Following the September 1 (1923) earthquake, which caused widespread devastation and the loss of at least 100,000 lives within a twenty-four-hour period, a rumor began to circulate—a rumor holding that Koreans were responsible for the massive number of Japanese deaths during the earthquake, as well as its aftermath; due to the aftershocks, fires swept Tokyo, water supplies became unreliable and unsafe, and the buildings continued to tremble and be destroyed, resulting in mass casualties, which somehow came to be rumored as having intentionally caused by Koreans. A bout of pogrom-style lynching erupted, spontaneously organized by Japanese residents of Tokyo and its neighboring townships, who fashioned themselves as vigilante groups, arming themselves with various homemade weapons and hunting down Koreans in their neighborhoods. While it is not clear exactly how many Koreans were killed in this manner, researchers by and large agree on a figure of at least six thousand. Hardly any criminal justice ensued; one court record shows, for example, that the courtroom, including the judge, burst out in laughter when a Japanese man described how he had killed a Korean. The killing of Koreans, in other words, was not exactly a crime that warranted heavy punishment in Japan at the time; it did not amount to homicide (Ryang 2007).

If we focus on the Korean and his death at the hands of the Japanese mob, we begin to see an interesting structure emerge. Inquiring into the ambivalence of the sacred, or *homo sacer*, the sacred man, Agamben notes that, in Rome, someone's taking away of someone else's life by killing was deemed as a "right over life and death." This extraordinary right in Roman law was expressed in the formula *vitae necisque potestas*, or the power of life and death, and denoted a father's right to kill his own son. Here, *vita* does not simply denote the living being, but "life exposed to death," as a father's killing of his son without impunity was different from his killing of his daughter for defilement or a

husband's killing of his wife for infidelity; the latter two cases belonged to the domestic sphere, while the former was a matter of public duty. The original Greek distinction between *zoē*, the simple living being, and *bios*, the meaningful life, was lost in Latin, but here, *vita* denotes *bios*, this being a matter of political life. As such, the father's power, *patria potestas*, was expressed as a legal or sovereign right, the right to kill without committing a crime. The son thus killed died as a bare life—with no political existence and no sacrificial value, only as a killable life (Agamben 1995: 87-88). For Agamben, it is in this connection that sovereign power manifests—in this case, in the executing father—and the meaning of the sacred is crystalized in the “unpunishability of killing and the exclusion from sacrifice” (Agamben 1995: 81). The structure of the sacred thus revealed is ambiguous, in that it is both polluting (by the fact of the blood) and awe-inspiring (in its extreme extraordinariness). Agamben notes that anthropologists have discovered similar concepts in diverse ethnographic settings, expressed in *mana* or *taboo* (Agamben 1995: 80).

I am not claiming here that the Koreans who were killed by the Japanese mobs were sacred, polluted, or examples of what I have just referred to as simple life; I am, however, suggesting that one hundred years ago, in 1923, this figure, the Korean, whose nation had been formally colonized thirteen years beforehand, was a sheer ambiguity in the eyes of the Japanese Imperial subjects in the aftermath of the gigantic earthquake and ensuing mass fire in Tokyo, which resulted in hundreds and thousands of deaths, massive property destruction, and social unrest; it is well known that thousands of Koreans were killed by the excited Japanese mobs, and that law enforcement was ineffective, basically amounting to letting mob violence rage on for two to three days in various locations throughout Tokyo, Yokohama, and surrounding areas.

The colonized, as in the case of the Korean, is different from the enslaved, in that while the killing of the latter may fall within the domestic domain, the killing of the former has to have public meaning and political consequences; yet, the former is ultimately killable by the logic of colonialism, according to which one nation takes over the other, asserting the latter's inferiority and subjugating the latter to the former. The position or identity of the Korean in Japan in the eyes of the Japanese public in 1923 was, beyond theoretical and legal reality, ambiguous, save for the fact that he or she was seen as poor, foreign, and incomprehensible. We may say, following Agamben, that the Korean was included in the Imperial order in the capacity of one who had been colonized (for example, for the purpose of providing cheap labor), this inclusion distinctly marked by exclusion (for being foreign and inscrutable) (Agamben 1995: 90). Legally, Koreans were not required to carry passports when traveling to Japan because of the colonial relationship between peninsula and archipelago, but they were not permitted to transfer their colonial household registration to the metropolis, a state of affairs that illustrated the temporary nature of their sojourn and their exclusion from public life. Seen in this way, exploring this figure gives us a clue to understanding the political structure of power in Imperial Japan — and national anthropological approach to Japan, even though Japan had not quite entered in the Western anthropological orbit prior to the 1940s, would help us grasp the meaning of this existence, the Korean, precisely by way of his/her exclusion from the nationhood.

As Foucault mentioned in relation to the Nazi regime, in which a large number of individuals were licensed to kill Jewish people, the members of the post-quake vigilante groups exercised their sovereign rights on behalf of the Emperor, the sovereign. However, unlike in the case of the Nazi regime, the prewar Japanese state never claimed to be a modern democracy; rather, it was

always clear that the nation was that of the Emperor, and that every member of the nation had to live and die for the Emperor as his or her loyal subject—a sentiment embodied in the official motto of the state that was used in those days, *tennō no sekishi*, or the Emperor’s children—Benedict’s work coming to mind here. We need to stress that Japan’s entry into modern nationhood was premised upon “restoring” the Imperial order. With the Meiji Restoration of 1867, the Japanese did not become modern people as citizens, but rather Imperial subjects. Meiji Japan was meant to be modern, in that it instated, following the European model, a series of state apparatuses, including taxation, a national registry, conscription, standardized education, transportation, a banking system, and so on. But, sovereignty in the modern Japanese nation unequivocally rested with the Emperor, and not with the people.

Under the Imperial sovereign, in times of crisis, Koreans were quickly revealed to be examples of killable life, their murder neither incurring divine wrath nor amounting to secular criminality. This is not so much because they were not human, but more because they were deemed as existing outside the Imperial order; that is to say, they were not the Emperor’s children—they were considered a different kind of human. The Korean, here, had no place in the order of the divine Emperor. It is telling that some of the Tokyo mobs justified the killings with the argument that Koreans were trying to kill the Crown Prince, rendering the killing of Koreans acts carried out in defense of the Imperial order (Kudō 2009). Needless to say, this resonates with what Foucault discusses in relation to racism—killing of the other’s group is the only way to save one’s own. Specifically, we recognize here that this racism went hand in hand with the faith in the Imperial order, the boundaries of which were drawn rather clearly, easily identifying who was inside and who was outside once disaster arrived.

6. The Korean within the Imperial Order



Figure 2. Keimyung University's Dongsan Medical Museum Director publicized this photo which is believed to be that of a Japanese military comfort station. On the left side of the photo, a pair of Korean rubber shoes, gomusin, can be seen. Photo courtesy of [JoongAng Daily, August 4, 2015](#).

As WWII started, followed by the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, which was to start the Pacific War, Koreans as a population came to be subjected to a different kind of regulation. From the late 1930s on, Japan faced a pressing need to mobilize the Korean labor force in connection with its war effort. Thus, the household registry system in the colony was reformed in order to bring it closer in line with that of Japan. This reform was one of the mechanisms by which the Japanese state apparatus classified Koreans as Japanese, something which had not been done previously. The Japanese household registry and the Korean

household registry each carried fundamentally different meanings, in that the former, instated after the Meiji Restoration, constituted the certification of Japanese families (note: not individuals) as units that belonged to the Imperial order, the Japanese Emperor being seen as the ultimate national head-of-state and his lineage the origin of the Japanese national lineage in the model of a family state. Such was the founding ideology of seventh-century Japan, which had creatively adopted the Chinese imperial system, according to which the Emperor had (and continues to have) no family name. The Emperor was assigned to grant family names to the people, making the sovereign the very source of the nation, and rendering all Japanese families, with their various names, into branch houses of the Imperial house (Amino 2005: 189-192; see Sakamoto 2000).

The Korean household registry, by way of contrast, certified that each lineage had its own ancestors, and it was only through their lineage that Koreans belonged to the Korean nation, as per the principles of Confucianism. No one, in other words, belonged to the nation directly as a child of the head-of-state (as in the case of the Imperial Japan). Further, lineage-related distinctions were sacred, in that if you and another individual came from the same lineage, even though you might not know each other at all (because of the extreme length of each lineage's duration, as well as the relatively small number of lineages in total), you were deemed as being related, incest taboos preventing you from marrying each other. Accordingly, due to this principle, Korean women do not change their family names upon marriage. Korean lineage practices did not, therefore, conform with the Imperial order, since, in the Korean system, the ultimate loyalty of members of each lineage rested with that lineage's ancestors, and not with the Emperor. This became a challenge, because only the Imperial subjects could serve in the Emperor's army. The pressing need to supply more soldiers on

multiple fronts, in the face of the WWII and the Pacific War, made it necessary to “rectify” the Korean household system. Thus, it was reformed to match its Japanese counterpart, unifying all members of a household under the household head’s last name; before, a Korean household registry could have multiple last names including that of the household head, his wife, and if his parents were living with him, possibly his mother’s (Mizuno 2008). Once the household registry system in the colony was made to conform with the Imperial order—that is to say, once Koreans were deemed to be a population equivalent to the Japanese national population vis-à-vis the Imperial order—Korean men began to be conscripted as the Emperor’s soldiers, beginning in 1941. This is an interesting example whereby the sovereign power and biopower converged in order to rationalize the recruitment of the colonized population into the national armed force in times of war. The figure of Korean, again, occupies an ambiguous position between the technologies of population count and the integrity of the sovereign.

It was not only Korean men of fighting age that were caught up in mobilization efforts to safeguard the Emperor’s nation. We have already seen the extreme nature of sacrifices made for the Emperor in the form of the kamikaze suicide bomber, as analyzed in the work of Benedict. The establishment of army comfort stations and the mass recruitment of Korean and Chinese women as well as women from other occupied areas for the use of soldiers as sexual objects was part of this same system. Women were classified as gifts from the Emperor to the soldiers and, thus, there were many rules regulating the soldiers’ “use” of them. Soldiers were prohibited from drinking with the women and from engaging in acts of violence against them, and the use of condoms was mandatory during intercourse. I am not saying that such rules were upheld or practiced at all times, but am merely pointing out that this was a set of techniques to manage and

regulate the soldiers and the women that was newly introduced upon the establishment of this system. Technologies and knowledge in the areas of statistics, hygiene, and public health were actively and regularly deployed in this operation. The army estimated the total number of women, using different formulas for rationing women to soldiers according to whether the latter were officers or rank-and-file troops. Estimates were made of the number of condoms required, with production quotas subsequently assigned to factories in Japan. Women were examined regularly for venereal disease and, for this purpose, the army had to establish a department concerned with hygiene. Whereas in northeastern China the army had occupied existing buildings, such as hotels and large restaurants, once the Pacific front opened up, civilian labor had to be recruited in order to construct basic buildings to be used as comfort stations, as the army and navy took women along with them; they also recruited or hunted down many local women in the Pacific and Southeast Asia (see Yoshimi 2002).

In this operation, the women were numbers, not individuals, and disposable ones at that. The comfort station was literally a camp where exception and the ultimate crisis became the norm. At the same time, newly introduced technologies were involved: technologies concerned with management, statistics, operations to secure supplies, measures to keep the women free from STDs and prevent pregnancy, and operations to transport the women over long distances. This operation, no matter how evil it may have been, becomes more visible once we set our gaze upon the nation-state or, in this case, the Imperial state of Japan as biopower.

The figure of the conscripted Korean, or the figure of the Korean woman in the latter case, is different from that of the Korean in the aftermath of the 1923 earthquake. In 1923, the Korean was an ambiguous human that existed outside of the Imperial orbit; in 1941, the Korean, still ambiguous, nevertheless existed

inside of the Imperial orbit. In the latter cases, we recognize the inter-penetrating working mechanisms of sovereign power that justifies all things in the name of the Emperor, for Japanese soldiers were not citizen-soldiers based on a social contract, but subject-soldiers bound by their unconditional faith in the Emperor. And thus, in theory, the Korean in the army or the Korean in the military comfort stations was not to be killed at will. Biopower operating through the newly introduced technologies of regulation and management complimented or accompanied the logic of the sovereign power.

7. The Korean—The Banished



Figure 3. A photo of the repatriation boat leaving the Niigata pier, in the 1960s. Photo courtesy of [Wikipedia](#).

Once the war was over, the Japanese state had to adjust, again, reassessing who the Koreans were as a population. Japan's surrender marked the end of its rule over Korea, with Koreans losing their Japanese nationality. Issued on May 2, 1947, one day before the declaration of Japan's new constitution, Imperial edict No. 207 deemed all Koreans remaining in Japan foreign persons or *gaikokujin*, effectively making them stateless, since Korea had been partitioned into north and south in 1945 and no national government had since been established. (In 1948, the Korean peninsula saw the rise of two mutually antagonistic regimes, respectively under the protection of the US and the USSR, each symbolically declaring complete sovereignty over all Koreans.) It is notable that the final action taken by the Emperor as sovereign, right before Japan declared itself to be a democracy under the US-granted constitution, was to exclude Koreans—make Koreans an exception—from Japanese political life, turning them back into bare life. As such, it is important to emphasize that Japan's postwar democracy was founded on the basis of the exception of Koreans in Japan (and other former colonial subjects that were declared to be non-Japanese). Here again, Koreans were included in Japan's social order by way of exclusion.

Upon the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty between Japan and the US in 1952, Koreans in Japan officially lost their Japanese nationality, and were referred to in the treaty as *heiwajōyaku kokuseki ridatsusha*, or persons having lost their Japanese nationality as a result of a peace treaty. Precisely echoing what Arendt surmised regarding the figure of the refugee in the aftermath of WWII, the Korean in Japan was, once again, a bare human, because basic human rights in a modern democracy are granted only when a human is a national (Arendt 1973). Stateless and nationless, Koreans in Japan, upon the final ending of the Empire, completely lost their human rights—the right to residence, the right to freedom of travel in and outside their country of residence, the right of access to

a social safety net, the right to vote and be elected, the right to serve as public servants, and so on. In 1945, they were Imperial subjects; in 1952, they were bare humans.

As of 1952, there were about 600,000 Koreans remaining in Japan. While the predominant majority of Koreans remaining in Japan came originally from the southern provinces of the Korean peninsula, neither North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) nor South Korea (the Republic of Korea) was recognized by the Japanese government, leaving Koreans in Japan continued to be stateless, bearing a precarious residential status with no sovereign nation-state to fall back on. Furthermore, they lost all entitlements and benefits that were granted on the basis of nationality, including veteran's benefits, social security, and atomic bomb victim's benefits, leaving them with only a livelihood protection benefit reserved for the most destitute.

By the end of the 1950s, a disproportionately high number of Koreans in Japan was receiving this basic livelihood protection benefit. As of 1952, 14.32 per cent of Koreans in Japan were receiving this benefit, a proportion six times larger than was the case for the Japanese population. This rate had jumped to 23.2 per cent by 1954, as opposed to 2.11 per cent for the Japanese population, leading to an estimate that one in five Koreans in Japan was receiving this benefit (Kikuchi 2020: 187). Parallel to this trend, during the 1950s, a desire to be repatriated to North Korea began to be expressed among Koreans in Japan, despite the fact that the predominant majority of Koreans in Japan originally came from the southern provinces of the Korean peninsula, that is to say, present-day South Korea. This is because, at the time, the South Korean government under Syngman Rhee refused to accept Koreans from Japan, since it was using the Korean deportation issue as a bargaining chip during its negotiation of a postcolonial settlement and diplomatic normalization with Japan.

The Koreans' desire to be repatriated to North Korea, it needs to be stressed, was an ambivalent and complex one; moving to North Korea was seen as a temporary measure prior to an eventual return to southern hometowns, because Koreans continued to believe that the reunification of Korea would and should happen eventually. Seeing this as an opportunity to enhance its diplomatic image, North Korea expressed an interest in accepting Koreans from Japan; some researchers see this as part of North Korea's overall strategy to simultaneously improve its international image through rapprochement with Japan and also outmaneuver South Korea (Park 2012). Japan, on the other hand, had a specifically biopolitical interest here – to reduce its social welfare burden by removing poor Koreans from Japan. When the International Committee of the Red Cross expressed interest in acting as an intermediary, the Japanese government seized upon the opportunity, instructing the Japanese Red Cross to enter into negotiations with the North Korean Red Cross. According to seminal research by Tessa Morris-Suzuki, who researched newly released documents from the International Committee of the Red Cross Headquarters, the Japanese Ministry of Welfare was eager to initiate the repatriation project, and various Japanese government officials are on record stating that getting rid of Koreans would hugely benefit the national budget in the long run (Morris-Suzuki 2007). The first repatriation boat (built and sent by the Soviets) entered the Japanese port of Niigata in December 1959. This repatriation route remained open until 1984, a cumulative total of 93,340 persons being repatriated from Japan to North Korea, including an estimated 1,830 Japanese nationals (mostly spouses) (see Hayashi 2019); this enterprise also facilitated diverse operations by North Korean agents (Kikuchi 2020: 17; see also Han 2005).

Some researchers in Japan, reacting to Morris-Suzuki's research, have insisted that it was not the Japanese government's intention or motive to banish

poor Koreans from Japan (e.g., Kikuchi 2020; Takasaki and Park 2010; Kurokawa 2009). I am not concerned with the government's motives or intentions, as these are likely to have been multiple, and more complex in nature than has been outlined to date. Rather, structurally speaking, the repatriation of southern Koreans from Japan to North Korea, starting in 1959, was a phenomenon whereby the Japanese state as biopower acted directly, exercising its will to manage and regulate Koreans in Japan. Focusing on the poor elements of this stateless population, this will to manage manifested in the form of banishment. This biopolitical measure was taken with consideration made for the general population of Japan and its long-term wellbeing too, as seen in the Japanese government's concern with the revenue implications of continuing to make welfare payments to poverty-stricken Koreans in Japan.

During the late 1950s, in contrast with the figure of the Korean in 1923 or in the 1940s, this figure was not killable, neither placed outside of the Imperial order nor integrated into the Imperial order in the form of the Emperor's soldier or the comfort woman, the Imperial gift. Rather, this stateless and severely destitute figure had to be altogether eliminated, since he or she did not fit into postwar democratic Japan's national structure. However, in the new international order, where Japan was no longer the Emperor's nation and was now a member of the free world, they could not simply be shipped away without there being any government willing to accept them, let alone be killed, as in 1923. A rational solution then arose when North Korea's own calculations as biopower propelled it to accept Koreans from Japan, if not necessarily on a utilitarian basis, although the nation was in need of labor to supplement the Chinese volunteers who had joined North Korea's People's Army during the Korean War and were returning to China at that time, then, more importantly, as a means of

demonstrating to the world its material as well as moral generosity in accepting its own nationals, who were poverty-stricken in a capitalist foreign land.

The manner in which Koreans in Japan, especially poor Koreans in Japan, were dealt with by the Japanese nation-state conforms with the path of modernization adopted by post-Occupation Japan—a path that emphasized maximization of efficiency and minimization of revenue waste while promoting the welfare of its own nationals. When we think about Occupation-era anthropology concerning Japan as a newly-reconstructed national whole or Benedict's appraisal of Japanese culture in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, we see the figure of the Korean completely and totally disregarded in their vision of a national anthropology of Japan. This is as if to say that the building of postwar Japan, under the auspices of the US military domination of postwar East Asia, was, from the outset designed so as to have Japan only for the Japanese, rendering any non-Japanese there, such as the Koreans who bear witness to Japan's colonial past, invisible. With this, Japan's colonial past itself was, somehow, erased. Japan's oft-critiqued war amnesia, perhaps best considered an example of partial amnesia as it does not extend to its role as victim, had already been germinating in US Occupation policy, as well as in the intellectual response that was complicit with it. Yet, without attending to the figure of the Korean, one wonders how successful any analysis of Japanese national culture can be when thinking about the postwar era. For, as stated earlier, postwar Japan was built on the exclusion of Koreans and other former colonial subjects from its national entity.

8. The Korean—Within the Population

It took twenty years for Japan and South Korea to normalize diplomatic relations and reach a postcolonial settlement. In 1965, upon the signing of a treaty between Japan and South Korea, South Korean nationality became available to Koreans in Japan. As stated above, the predominant majority of Koreans in Japan originally came from southern Korea, making South Korea their ancestral homeland.

However, expatriate Koreans had been severely affected by the partition of Korea and the ensuing Cold War confrontation, including the atrocious Korean War (1950-1953). The post-1965 availability of South Korean nationality was met with a complex and complicated response among Koreans in Japan. Despite the fact that the hometowns of many lay in the south, there was widespread and fierce opposition to the military dictatorship then in power in South Korea. As far as the Japanese nation-state was concerned, however, this would mean that those who acquired South Korean nationality—that is to say, those who became true foreigners in Japan—were the only population protected under permanent resident status, with Koreans who did not apply for South Korean nationality remaining stateless and being seen as an unwanted burden on the national coffers, as well as a political liability; this latter population was not truly foreign on the one hand and not included in the Japanese nation on the other.

Koreans were, reflecting the fact that they had lived in Japan for decades, spanning multiple generations, and regardless of whether they supported North Korea or South Korea, unmistakably assimilated into Japanese culture. Unlike the first-generation colonial immigrants, Japan-born Koreans were native speakers of the Japanese language, and the only country they knew was Japan, no matter how precarious their legal membership within Japanese society might have been. As the decade of the 1960s closed with failed student demonstrations and anti-US Security Treaty protests, and with a massive US military base moving to Okinawa, Japan rapidly became peaceful and prosperous—as

reflected in the rise of the *nihonjinron* discourse, seen earlier in this article. The figure of the Korean in Japan was, on the surface of society, now becoming gradually indistinguishable within the mainstream Japanese population.

From the mid-1970s, the majority of marriages involving Koreans in Japan were between Koreans and Japanese, with Korean-to-Korean marriages becoming less and less common. But a Korean-to-Japanese marriage in Japan did not automatically qualify the Korean spouse or their children for Japanese citizenship, because Japanese nationality law rested on the principle of male consanguinity, i.e., only those born to a Japanese father (not mother) would become Japanese. In addition, simply getting married to a Japanese person did not change one's access to Japanese nationality, which remained unavailable unless one filed a naturalization application, a separate process to that involved in marrying a Japanese citizen.

Starting in 1978, however, upon its ratification of the International Covenants on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other related covenants and conventions in the area of human rights, the Japanese government became open to international scrutiny, and had to address its treatment of women and minorities in broad areas of equal opportunity in employment and education, marriage and individual freedom. One of the changes that ensued involved Japanese women becoming eligible to hand down their Japanese nationality to their offspring, regardless of who they were married to (Webster 2010). This resulted in the creation of many "new" Japanese out of the Koreans in Japan, individuals whose mothers were Japanese and who were now eligible, retrospectively, for Japanese citizenship. In the same vein, the Japanese state now had to grant some kind of permanent resident status to those Koreans who had not opted to become South Korean nationals after 1965. Starting from the early 1980s, permanent resident

status began to be granted to Koreans whose residence in Japan originated during the colonial period, as well as to their descendants, regardless of whether they supported South Korea or not. The quality of their permanent resident status steadily improved and by the early 1990s they were provided with broader protections compared to the past.

By the early 2000s, reflecting the end of the military dictatorship and steady democratization in South Korea on the one hand, and ongoing misrule in North Korea, compounded by bleak news concerning famine and other disasters there on the other, more Koreans in Japan opted to apply for South Korean nationality, for which they were eligible as long as they could provide proof of ancestral origins in South Korea. Today, most Koreans in Japan are South Korean nationals. It is ironic to consider that it was only when they had become overseas nationals of South Korea that they came to be more or less integrated into Japanese society *as foreigners*; that is to say, again, their inclusion was based on exclusion. This, however, does not mean that all Koreans in Japan with South Korean nationality support South Korea or intend to be repatriated to South Korea. Their South Korean nationality falls under a special category within South Korean nationality law, and in exchange for declaring that they have no intention to permanently move to South Korea and forgoing the right to vote in South Korean elections, this population is exempted from universal mandatory military service obligations (for males).

More importantly, it is said that in recent decades, approximately ten thousand or more Koreans have been naturalized each year as Japanese; the procedure to be naturalized as Japanese having been steadily made less onerous. While in the past, approximately 600,000 Koreans in Japan could trace their presence in Japan to migration during the colonial period, this figure has fallen to fewer than 300,000, with most of them having South Korean nationality and

many eyeing naturalization. The alien registration card that they are required to apply for and carry has also been dramatically simplified. The figure of the Korean in Japan is now that of a legitimate foreigner whose accelerated potential to be naturalized as Japanese renders him or her part of a population that will soon be absorbed into the general Japanese population.

I should clarify: this figure of the Korean is *not* reflective of the thousands of South Korean citizens who migrated to Japan on a professional or a personal basis in recent decades, even though they are lumped together along with old-timer Koreans in Japan as “South Korean citizens” in Japanese immigration statistics. This figure of the Korean that I discuss is the Korean that originated in the colonial era, the one that has undergone several mutations in its articulation along with shifts in the form of governing power in Japan.

The irony is that in 2020, one hundred years later, we are seeing the “killing” of the figure of the Korean again. This time, unlike in 1923, the life of the Korean does not have to end in a bloody death; the Korean simply has to be processed by the Japanese Ministry of Justice administration via application forms, registrations, and ID cards in order to cease to be a Korean in Japan, that is to say, by way of being absorbed in the population management process of the biopower. Once naturalized, is the figure of the Korean, finally included in Japan’s general population, now going to disappear? The answer, needless to say, requires further study.

9. National Anthropology and the Figure of the Korean

If we overlap the metamorphosis of the figure of the Korean in Japan with the national anthropology of Japan, we get an interesting picture. The rise of

Imperial Japan was reflected in the replacement of the Korean as a killable life with that of the Korean placed within the Imperial order, subjected to biopolitical registration, regulation, evaluation, and so on. When Benedict studied Japan as the enemy of the US, therefore, the Korean was categorically included in the group of people called the Japanese. Yet, as has been shown, not including this figure in the study of wartime Japan was detrimental, as such exclusion set the pace for the Occupation.

By the time the Allied Occupation was over, however, the Korean had been unequivocally removed from membership of the Japanese nation, requiring the Japanese state to deploy a different kind of statistics and different technologies of regulation. Now in Japan, sovereignty belonged to the people, as per the US-granted postwar constitution, unlike in prewar Japan, where the national sovereign had been the Emperor. The Korean stood outside postwar Japan's national sovereignty, yet this figure lingered on in Japan. When the nation-focused anthropology of Japan was drawing attention to household-like, homogeneous, hierarchical, yet harmonious Japan, the Korean, especially the poor Korean, was faced with banishment to North Korea, while the Korean remaining in Japan entered into a five-decade-long process leading, finally, to an appearance in the normalized national population registry of Japan. This process, needless to say, continues today, as Koreans in Japan have begun to be gradually absorbed into society, either through legal avenues such as naturalization or through the acquisition of cultural citizenship, as they perfect their assimilation or master self-integration into Japanese society as Koreans.

The metamorphosis of the figure of the Korean during the last one hundred years cannot be fully understood without reference to the national anthropology of Japan, albeit in a critical sense. Similarly, national anthropology of Japan will not be complete without the figure of the Korean. Japan's entry into

the Western anthropological corpus was as a nation, and the other side of its postwar formation as a culturally and racially homogeneous nation with a hierarchical yet harmonious order and one of the world's strongest economies will not be revealed unless we look at figures such as that of the Korean in Japan. Seen from the standpoint of this type of figure, Japan never was, and never has been, homogeneous or harmonious. This figure can be the Japanese woman, for example, whose equal opportunity is still a challenge in the legal framework of the Japanese state. This figure can be the recently-arrived migrant worker in Japan, whose basic labor rights are disregarded on the basis that he does not hold national membership, so to speak, and hence, becomes identical to the figure of the refugee after WWII. This figure can be the disabled person in Japan, whose basic human rights often don't even rise to the level of the public discourse. Without this figure—without figures like that of the Korean, the woman, the migrant worker, and the disabled person—the national anthropology of Japan is not complete.

This is not simply to say that in order to conduct a study of Koreans in Japan (or of any other discrete topic pertaining to the Japan sub-field), an examination of the historical background as well as state policy-making is necessary; such is a given. This is, rather, to suggest that the national anthropological tradition of the inquiry into Japan as practiced in Anglophone anthropology creates conditions that are useful and helpful on the one hand and detrimental on the other for thinking about Japan as a cultural entity; useful and helpful, because it gives a larger framework than traditional anthropological scope; detrimental, because as it exists today, it does not stand on a thorough intellectual deconstruction of the existing notion of homogeneity—this notion was only forgotten, rather than critically overcome.

In order to think about the figure of the Korean, a national-scale anthropological knowledge of Japan is not only useful, but also necessary. The way this population has been dealt with in Japan, through the transition from sovereign power to biopower, as well as in the inter-permeation between the two, is incumbent on the national anthropology of Japan, or at least, a symbiotic component of an anthropological understanding of Japan as a nation-state. At the same time, simply separating (say) Koreans in Japan and looking into their reality, a reality somewhat removed from the mechanism of Japanese state power, while only registering that they are discriminated against or disadvantaged, would not make for a sufficient study or critique. Japan as national entity utilizes multiple and multifarious forms of power to govern, regulate, manage, and chart. Anthropology needs to be attentive not only to which forms of power these include, but also to which they exclude. The national anthropology of Japan, therefore, would make a useful tool, when, and only when, it is critically overcome and productively incorporated into new anthropological approaches to Japan.

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