

Nationalism and Colonialism in Japan's “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” in World War II

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This article examines several major arguments regarding the issue of nationalism that appeared during the era of the so-called “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” Differences in opinions appeared in discussions and debates among scholars who were engaged in studies of themes related to the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere after the end of the war. Against the backdrop of the Japanese reappearance in Southeast Asian countries after the war and the normalization of Korean-Japanese diplomatic relations, these scholars continued their studies while considering the new role Japan should assume in the region. The conservative approach has increasingly gained momentum, which contains sharp differences from the atmosphere of Western and other East Asian scholars.

Japanese imperialists devised and established a hierarchical structure that placed Japan at the top and other countries at lower levels through this concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. This hierarchical structure was seemingly intended to negate the Western concept of “colonialism” and “self-determination of nations.” However, it actually shows the typical principle of divide and rule that encouraged discrimination and misconception within East Asia. The countries that were split by mutual control and opposition were bound together by the same goal of opposing the U.S. and the Western world. The case of Joseon and Taiwan, which were at once colonies and regarded as extensions of Japanese imperialism, clearly shows the contradictions inherent in this idea.

Keywords: Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, East Asia, Japanese imperialism, nationalism, colonialism

Introduction

The concept of the so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Dai-Tōa Kyōeiken*) could be regarded as a form of ideology that was established in order to justify Japan's invasion and colonial rule of nearby countries in Asia and the Pacific Ocean during the Second World War. In the early days of expansion, during which the Japanese army invaded Taiwan, Joseon Korea and Manchuria, the Japanese emphatically propagated an argument that all the people living in those regions in fact shared such similarities as racial profiles and cultural traditions. This idea was later entitled as the theory of "Same Race, Same Culture" (*Dō shudōbunron*). The concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was part of the Japanese plans to establish a new order throughout the region, and such was enabled by the Japanese military campaign that continued throughout Southeast Asian societies and also the Pacific region. This was one of the very first plans of regional order in East Asia. In its own transformation into an imperial state based upon military campaigns and invasions, modern Japan was facing a crucial need to resolve an important issue—to determine what kind of political status it would grant the populations of colonies and semi-colonies in occupied areas. As Mark Peattie mentions, "throughout the fifty-year history of Japan's overseas empire no issue was more important or more sensitive than that concerning the proper place of the nation's colonial peoples within a Japanese order" (Peattie 1988: 103), the most important and delicate issue that concerned the Japanese invasion of Joseon and China, and also its expansion towards the Southeast countries, was the issue of the nation and nationalism.

The national issue featured inside the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, showed a rather self-contradictory nature, as the issue represented two different and fairly distinctive arguments and sentiments that conflicted each other. One was the argument propagating the supposedly exclusive superiority of the Japanese people, and the other was the supposed embracing of the fact that all the Asian countries should be treated equally. But as the regions' relationships with the Western world were taken into consideration, new questions were generated: Was the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere really free from any kind of racism? That is to say, was it either an exclusive doctrine only meant for application to the situations of Asian countries, or was it meant to explore a more universal application in terms of racism? Considering the issue of colonies, such questions might as well be redefined: Were these colonial peoples distinct races, deserving permanently separate,

though sharply subordinate, destinies? Or through the benevolent agency of Japanese civilization, could they become members of one undifferentiated cultural, spiritual, and geographic entity of Japan (Peattie 1988: 103)?

In this article, several major arguments regarding the issue of nationalism that appeared during the era of the so-called "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" will be examined, and especially, how those aforementioned, conflicting opinions were represented in actual arguments. Differences of opinion also appeared in discussions and debates that continued after the end of the war among scholars who were engaged in studies of themes related to the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Against the backdrop of Japanese reappearance in Southeast Asian countries after the war and the normalization of Korean-Japanese diplomatic relations, these scholars continued their studies considering the new role that Japan should assume in the region. Interestingly, Japan is becoming increasingly conservative nowadays. And the opinion that the Japanese had done something good in this area seems to have gained momentum increasingly, showing sharp differences from the opinion of Western and other East Asian scholars.

Through the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the Japanese imperialist devised and established a hierarchy structure that placed Japan at the top, and placed other countries at lower levels. This hierarchical structure was seemingly intended to negate the Western concept of "colonialism" and "self-determination of nations."

However, it actually showed the typical principle of divide and rule that encouraged discrimination and misconception within the East Asia. The countries that were split by mutual control and opposition were bound together by the same goal of opposing the U.S. and the Western world. The case of Joseon and Taiwan, which were at once colonies and regarded as extensions of Japanese imperialism, clearly shows the contradictions inherent in this idea.

Nation and Nationalism in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

All the opinions and views suggested and presented during the era of the so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere bore traces of this contradiction faced by Japanese imperialism. For example, the planners of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere were the most firm believers and strongest support-

ers of the idea which supposed the exclusively distinctive superiority of the Japanese people. They believed that the most important accomplishment to be achieved in establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was to establish the Japanese people's basic perspective viewing other peoples of other countries. They argued that "We, the Yamato people, the core of construction of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, should always stay above other peoples of other countries and maintain a level of dignity and superiority as the leader figure. So, in terms of actual policies and also the execution of them, we should avoid treating ourselves the same as other peoples, and we should not hesitate to take drastic measures regardless the status of the population" (Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai 1995: 66). And in order to do so, the expansion of the Japanese population and upgrading the Japanese people's level of potential were considered to be the imperative tasks of the day, as only such expansion and upgrades would serve as the basis for the construction of the so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. They also argued that people should get married while still young, have more children, and establish plans to support mothers with children. Ultimately, they were strongly suggesting the elimination of Western philosophies based upon individualism and ejecting them from the Japanese people's minds, and they were also suggesting the promotion of a philosophy that had been based upon the traditional household units (家) to support enlarging the Japanese population (Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai 1995: 70-73).

They also considered two things to be very important in their policies regarding the nationality issue. One was the emphasis upon the purity of the blood. And the other was the suggestion of the importance that the education of the Japanese language supposedly harbored. The latter was considered important because the Japanese language would ultimately have to serve its role as the primary language in all the countries inside the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. They explained that the U.S. and U.K. were able to maintain a certain level of rule in Southeast Asia because the English language had spread throughout the world, and they argued that "the Japanese language should be promoted and spread to such extent as well, to ultimately replace the English language in the region." In other words, "the local languages would prove to be insufficient in the task of letting all the people inside the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere understand the real meaning of being part of the national polity (*kokutai*) to embrace the meaning of establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere", and that was why the spreading of the Japanese language was called for (Kikakuin 1942: 17; Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai 1995: 78, 82).

Regarding the issue of blood purity, the Japanese imperialists argued that, in order to put all the effort and strength of the Japanese people together and to maintain a superior position to those of the other countries and peoples, the Japanese people living in areas other than the homeland should live in a concentrated fashion, in groups. They also recommended that they avoid inter-racial marriage by not blending in other peoples' residential areas. They believed that the "inherent superiority of the Japanese people" would be compromised if such inter-racial marriages were occurred and strongly suggested that in order to maintain the level of purity, the people who were leaving the homeland might as well be accompanied by (Japanese) their life partners (Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai 1995: 77; Kikakuin 1942: 15-16). Yet, unlike the issue of language, the issue of blood purity did invoke a controversy. For example, some believed that maintaining the so-called purity of blood was a rather difficult task and even to be simply not possible, and thus banning people from producing mixed children would, in the end, cause unexpected side effects. Some suggested that approving the producing of mixed children and guiding them to become genuine members of the Japanese people would be an honorable act of serving the spirit of "*hakkō ichiu*," the spirit of imperial benevolence that should be prevalent throughout the Empire. And some even expressed their opinion of actively introducing Japanese blood into the veins of other peoples through inter-racial marriage (Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai 1995: 77-78; Kikakuin and Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai ed. 1995: 148-150).

Interestingly enough, in the case of Joseon, the idea of introducing Japanese blood to the Joseon people's biological makeup was frequently discussed as the Korean peninsula was considered to be a potential part of their own territory for the future. The land was going to be owned and regulated by the Japanese, so why not infuse Japanese blood with the Korean? In regions like Joseon, which were showing traces of advanced levels of assimilation into the Japanese Empire, the Japanese also intended to recruit women from higher levels of society, have them live in a sort of concentrated facility, and encourage them to have and give birth to mixed children, and give them extra special education (Kikakuin and Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai ed. 1995: 148-149).

Yet, in the end, regarding the issue of blood purity, the Japanese imperial authorities maintained a strict prohibition of inter-racial marriage in their effort to maintain the level of purity of the Japanese blood, in spite of the general position of earlier. So it was stated that "instead of going astray in an abstract and passive effort to suppress inter-racial marriage and producing mixed children, a

detailed policy should be established” (Kikakuin and Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai ed. 1995: 149).¹ This racist principle was not only applied to the relationship between Japan and other Asian countries but was also to be applied to that between the Western world and Asia. In this vein, all the people living inside the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere were strictly instructed “not to have inter-racial marital relationships with White people in order to maintain the purity of the blood of East Asian peoples” (Kokusaku Kenkyukai Jimukyoku: 3-4, 7-12).

This kind of perspective on the issue of superiority of the Japanese differed slightly from the opinions of Ozaki Hotsumi (尾崎秀實), who led the effort to establish the theory of the East Asian Cooperative Community (*Tōa kyōdōtai*), and Koiso Kuniaki (小磯國昭), who suggested the establishment of the East Asian Coalition (*Tōa renmei*).²

Koiso suggested the establishment of a vast coalition that would include not only Japan, Manchuria, and China (at the center), but also Southeast Asia, the East Indian islands, and parts of the Pacific Ocean. Even though his true intentions were murky at best, and there was no way his plans could have been implemented or transformed into reality, he argued that Japan’s advance into Southeast Asia would enable it to free those countries that had been suppressed and colonized by Western powers, and the peoples in those areas would be granted political autonomy in electing their own leaders, who would eventually come to serve as links between Tokyo and the local areas. He also insisted that such a political system would be very important for the economic bonding that would have to be established between the colonies and the Japanese homeland, and he hoped that the establishment of an independent economic block in East Asia would prove to be an effective tool in leveling the playground in their negotiation and trade with the Western world (Pelz 1974: 179-180).

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1. In studies with Micronesia as an example, Peattie (1988: 219) said that the colonial administration tended to favor marriages and liaisons between Japanese men and Micronesian women since the families which resulted from them were more Japanese in character than they were Micronesian. It is possible that such trends could have existed in regions that were under military occupation or regions that were granted autonomous control, but it is hard to believe that such a trend could have been a general policy.
 2. My comments in this part are based upon the belief that the theories regarding the East Asian Cooperation Community or the East Asian Coalition were different kinds of theories compared to the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which was based more upon military operations.

Ozaki, who suggested the establishment of the East Asian Cooperative Community, showed a more ideal attitude on the issue of nationalism. First, he thought the concept of the "East Asian New Order," which intended to implement the plan of an East Asian Cooperative Community as announced by the cabinet of the Konoe Fumimaro (近衛文麿) administration in November 1938, to be a radically different doctrine from previous ones in terms of policies regarding China since the doctrine was "not resorting to the Western style of intending to rule China by dividing it, but was trying to eliminate the clashes of interest between Japan and China to ultimately find a way for them to cooperate with each other" (Ozaki Hotsumi 2004: 278). To him, the news of the plan to establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, announced in August 1940, was not a favorable thing to hear. In his opinion, such a plan was only adding Southeast Asia (*Nanyō*) to the region that was already covered by the plan for a East Asian New Order (Ozaki Hotsumi 2004 (1940): 273-74).

Just as China was a hot issue within the context of the theory of establishing an East Asian New Order, he asserted, the Southeast Asian area (*Nambo*) was an important issue in the creation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. The area was the arena in which world powers such as the United States and Great Britain had confronted the self-liberation movements of the nations in the region. The core meaning of *Nambo* was related to the "national." Furthermore, the promotion of national movements in Southeast Asia was going to be deeply related to national movements in China. So, he argued that the colonized and suppressed peoples of both regions (that is to say China and *Nambo*) should liberate themselves, stand up independently, and cooperate with each other in order to establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere.³

In order to establish a new order throughout East Asia, he asserted that "national movements in the *Nambo* region should neither be fostered nor regarded as part of political intrigues or strategic operations, but be embraced with wholehearted understanding" (Ozaki Hotsumi 2004: 283-284). He said that Southeast Asia should not be considered solely as "resource pools for Japan's economic interest" or "military outposts for Japan," and naturally he was tremendously critical toward those who supported the Southward advance (*nan-*

3. He adds that the China and the *Nambo* problem were not mutually exclusive issues. He argued that the issue of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere was based upon bonds that were established at the highest levels of each nation or people, and so should be approached with the same leadership spirit and ways kept in mind. See Ozaki Hotsumi (2004: 282-283).

shin) only in terms of extracting resources to establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Ozaki Hotsumi 2004: 329). To him, the very first step and the overall premise for establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was to not only expel the U.S. and U.K. entrepreneurs but also to eliminate the old order which had suppressed Asian nations for years. According to him, the liberation of the Asian nations which had suffered Western colonial rule would only be complete when the bases of old ruling systems were dismantled; he argued that that was the single most important factor in creating a new order that would prevail throughout East Asia (Ozaki Hotsumi 2004: 330).

Although a minority, part of the Japanese Communist party also argued against the Japanese invasion and campaigns continuing in China and Southeast Asia, and supported the liberation of those regions. Against the intentions of Japanese imperialists, they criticized the emptiness of the policies regarding national issues employed in Southeast Asian countries. In the cases of Malaysia, Java, Sumatra, and Borneo they argued that in spite of the vast lands and rich resources, the Japanese were not granting them any level or kind of independence, not even a false one, which they had granted to Burma or Philippines. They also pointed out that Japanese always openly addressed those regions as Japanese territories and colonies (Nosaka Sanzo 1943; Ono Ken'ichi 1992: 267).

The Issue of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as Dealt with in Japanese Post-1945 East Asian Studies

Differences of opinion on the nation and the nationalism appeared not only during the so-called the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere period. East Asian studies also touched on such differences after the end of the War. Studies conducted on the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in this period did not view the material as a mere historical fact or event. During the 1950s, Japan was advancing economically into Southeast Asian countries and needed to restore diplomatic relationships with nearby East Asian countries. Japan and its people also had to revise its own role in the East Asian community, which would be required of them for their future. Right after the War, war tribunals found Japan responsible for the War and the new Peace Constitution was enacted. During that time the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere definitely had no place in Japan. It was a total nightmare that no one wished to

have again. But in the 1960s, when Japan was actively involving itself in advances into Southeast Asian countries, the idea of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere came to be regarded as a historical concept which was in fact quite attractive to researchers trying to find historical experiences that were positively related to the role that Japan had played in the region.

During the post-war period, Takeuchi Yoshimi, a specialist in Chinese studies in Japan, had an occasion to join a conference, which revealed the aforementioned atmosphere fairly vividly.⁴ The moderator said that, although the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was a concept somewhat apart from reality, it indeed had certain values and virtues that deserved an affirmative evaluation. He also tried to emphasize the supposed fact that the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere has indeed affected the national movements of various Asian countries. Another participant of the discussion pointed out that the concept had a certain historical meaning in that the Greater East Asian War (Pacific War in the United States) led to the liberations of many colonies, and that same participant also argued that Japanese activities were pretty similar to the French advances that had been made into several nearby European countries after the French Revolution. Takeuchi also agreed to such assessment, pointing out as well that there had indeed been similarities. But in response to an argument saying that the Japanese invasions invoked the national awareness and sentimentalities of the Southeast Asian countries, Takeuchi said that it was the national movements which had existed even before the Japanese invasions that utilized such Japanese advances and invasions, and not the other way around. Yet, in essence, he also agreed with the argument that the Japanese "advances" did have qualities that had stimulated national movements.

Notwithstanding efforts to apparently acknowledge negative aspects generated from the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, actively trying to excavate new positive meanings out of the same concept have recently become a new major trend in post-war studies dedicated to the issue of this topic. For example, It is said that the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere did promise the fulfillment of some noble causes like the liberation of countries or the liberation of Asia but was rather detached from reality, and therefore ended up being a mere rhetoric. Yet at the same time, it is also argued that naming all those things that Japan had done or uttered at the time to

4. The following is quoted from Takeuchi Yoshimi et al. 1963, and especially from pp. 11-13.

have been wrong or meaningless would be a self-negating act of depreciation, and a willful distortion of facts. According to him, the sense of equality among the Asian people, the understanding of nationalism, and the respect toward the traditions and customs of the Asian people were things that really came out from the Japanese people's mind at the time. This kind of approach usually evaluates Japanese policies during the war time as an anti-thesis to the Western powers' sentimentality of being rulers and their policy of divide and rule, and also perceives Japanese policies as an alternative way of Asian modernization against communist revolution theory. In other words, they find the Japanese policies toward Asian nations at that time worthy of re-evaluation (Maruyama Shizuo 1965: 126-127).

There have been two different opinions conflicting with each other regarding the influences that Japan had upon South Asian countries under occupation by Japan. Some scholars emphasize the fact that the Japanese indeed nurtured and educated the people who later took charge of national movements. They argue that therefore all the national movements of the period had nothing to do with indigenously developed national movements. On the other hand, other scholars stressed the indigenously and also independently developed national movements and the relationships between those movements. They usually do not place much value upon the experience of the Japanese occupation. The first opinion could be labeled as the theory of separation, and the second one could be labeled as the theory of consecutiveness. Needless to say, on a positive note the former has a tendency to evaluate the intention of Japan, which triggered the Pacific War as leader of their own Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Okabe Makio 1992: 3-4). Surely these two opinions have not always been mutually exclusive, and recently they have been showing apparent compromise under the agreement of re-evaluating individual policies in terms of the role they played in maintaining the status of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. But the increasing level of conservatism of the Japanese society is a fact that can no longer be ignored, and in such an atmosphere, affirmative re-evaluations of the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and also that the war started under such cause, are turning up more and more often.

Then again, there have also been negative and critical opinions regarding the role of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Okabe Makio mentioned that the Japanese policies that were devised and implemented were all based upon considerations of the impending war, and were all chosen in Japan's best interests, regardless of the issue of victory or defeat; there was no evidence that

Japan indeed intended to provide the day of true liberation and independence of Asian countries which they promised would come after the end of the War. He also said that the masterminds of certain political actions should face the consequences and take responsibility when the outcome did not turn out the way it was intended, but when such actions triggered a result which was not intended but ended up being positively received by the people in later days, the people behind such action should not try to take credit for that. It was his way of asking the Japanese people to re-evaluate their own historical consciousness and ethical sensitivity (Okabe Makio 1992: 10).

This kind of minority opinion in Japan is actually serving as the opinion of the majority among Western scholars. This is especially true for the North American case. For example, Mark R. Peattie argued that Japan could not have possibly considered the people in the colonized regions to have been on the same level with their own considering the fundamental contradictions among the basic principles that underlay most of Japanese colonial doctrine.⁵ To him, the Japanese case was an entirely different one from the French ideology of assimilation which had such universalistic elements as the Republican ideology of 1789. Although the Japanese colonial rulers endlessly asserted the obligations that bound Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese, and Micronesians to a common emperor, they excluded these subject peoples from the rights held by Japanese citizens in the homeland under the Meiji constitution. And so, according to him, the assimilation of the Japanese Empire was only a useful administrative concept, a mechanical means by which to remold the colonial peoples into loyal, law-abiding subjects who could become almost Japanese (Peattie 1988: 104).

Peter Duus was also critical in evaluating Japanese policies on Asian nations during the era of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. Although it was decorated with catchphrases like the "Destiny of the Nation," the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere was only a temporary and arbitrary answer to the situation that Japan was facing (Duus 1992: 111). By suggesting the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, Japan was able to harness the hopes and wishes that the Asian people had had for their own liberation and channel them to be used for Japan's own desire and ambition to conquer the entire region (Duus 1992: 114). While claiming its own identity as a Pan-Nationalist one, in reality Japan intended the expansion of their imperial

5. For detailed discussions on several principles, see Peattie (1988: 103).

rule throughout the region, and the concept also served in spreading Japanese ideology throughout the region. Duus asserted that it intended to reconcile world opinion by justifying military assaults in the name of Pan-Nationalism. Such an attempt, if it were successful, would have enabled Japan to justify the cause and initiation of an imperialistic expansion of territory in the era of anti-imperialism. Also, in another aspect, the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere could have served as a reason for local leaders and countries conquered and occupied by the Japanese to cooperate with the Japanese (Duus 1992: 120).

Hierarchies of the East Asian Nations

Then, how was the issue of nationalism embraced within the basic principles of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, and also how did it function along the actual implementation of policies based upon such principles? It is a well known fact that by suggesting such a concept as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere Japan was attempting to devise a set of principles constituting a philosophy of universality based upon supposedly Asian values, but in reality upon Japanese values, to fend off the Western world. Especially after the Japanese-Chinese War, Japan continued its efforts to develop new principles which would replace existing Western ideas such as “sovereignty,” “colonies” and “the self-determination of the nations,” and announce their own to the international society. Since justifying warfare with theories based upon a structure of conflicts with rich and poor nations as the main opponents was deemed insufficient, it became necessary to completely re-evaluate the principles of the self-determination of the nation and to extract an alternative.⁶ Either successful or not, all the theories such as the East Asian Cooperation Community of the Shōwa Research Society (Showa kenkyūkai) or the East Asian Coalition theory suggested by Ishiwara Kanji were all considered to have been part of such attempts.

In order to establish the distinctive characteristics of a specific realm of its own based upon mutual prosperity, and also a starkly discernible line between oneself and the others(in this case the Western world), openly negating and

6. Discussion regarding the difficulties and limits of this kind of attempt can be consulted in Minagawa Masaki (2000: 110-111).

denying the existence of colonies would have been the most effective step to take. So, the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere was propagated as a concept designed to serve the cause of dismantling traditional versions of colonies, and in an overall sense, denied the historical existence of the concept of colonies altogether. By creating and establishing a new realm of life, they argued that they would be able to suggest a new worldwide order based upon guidance and cooperation on a previously unseen, unprecedented level (Sumiya Etsuji 1942: 169, 178, 208, 222). In the hierarchy of the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, colonies as components were basically denied, and establishing military bases inside colonized areas was deemed unacceptable, in the spirit of enhancing the welfare of the world and mankind (Kokusaku Kenkyukai Jimukyoku: 3-5, 10).

But as we all know, this was a very empty argument. The pre-designed nature of the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere had proven that already, as seen in the cases of Joseon and Taiwan which had already been considered as annexed and assimilated into the Japanese realm, and also in cases of Indonesia and Malaysia which the Japanese did not grant any level of independence because control over those countries (in terms of extracting resources) was crucial to the Japan's war effort after the Japanese established advances into Southeast Asian regions. Inside the hierarchy structure (the "New Order") of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, as we know, the Asian countries were placed and linked with each other in a fairly multi-layered fashion. In the system, all the countries and peoples were assorted into several categories such as "leading states," "independent states," "independent Protectorates," and "under supervision" etc. according to their own statuses in terms of values, capabilities, the level of the public, and honorable achievements (Minagawa Masaki 2000: 122).

Matsuoka Yosuke (松岡洋友), the foreign minister of the time, mentioned that the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere was based upon intentions to grant all the people and all the countries their own rightful places to bind Japan, Manchuria, and China all inside a single circle, a unified realm, and eventually expand such realm. This virtually meant that China and Manchuria were placed inside the hierarchy right after Japan, which was at the top of that hierarchy and at the center of such a ring, while other Southeast Asian countries were at the bottom (Berger 1974: 213). In a similar vein, the case of Manchukuo clearly showed that the Joseon people were placed right after the Japanese as a second class people (*nitō kokumin*), and the Chinese were at the lowest (Yun

Hwi-tak 2001), at least among the major ones.

The hierarchy structure inside the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere either intentionally or inadvertently encouraged discriminative actions which included maintaining a superior attitude over other nations or peoples. It also fostered misconception, contempt, disregard, complacent indifference and insensitive treatment (Peattie 1988: 217). For example, in order to justify recruiting soldiers from Joseon and in order to justify the draft itself, the Japanese Empire argued that the Joseon people were granted a crucial and important role of participating in the construction of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and that the Joseon people were explicitly different from Indonesian people.⁷ According to them, the Joseon people who answered to the draft call were considered as “Soldiers of God,” led by the Tenno himself, and continuously reiterated the supposed fact of Joseon’s own position of leading and guiding the Southeast Asian people, invoking a sentimentality of superiority in dealings with other peoples.

In a similar fashion, during the Japanese occupation the indigenous residents of Southeast Asia, including Saipan, had a tagline following them, which called them a third class people (*santō kokumin*), or *tōnin*, (“Islanders,” *tōmin*) (Utsumi Aiko and Tanabe Hisao 1983: 100). The title of “third class people” was not simply an insult but was referring to the general situation of the Chamorro of the Marianas or the *kanaka* (a completely pejorative term applied to all Carolinians and Marshallese) people. For example, they were generally banned from entering public bath houses or restaurants owned and managed by Japanese (Utsumi Aiko and Tanabe Hisao 1983: 100-101). In coffeehouses, the Japanese and the Micronesians were often seated at different tables (Peattie 1988: 217). In spite of the *Hakkōichiu* principle (the endless incantations about imperial benevolence usually apportioned throughout the Empire), the Micronesians were accorded the lowest place of all its subjugated peoples. The racial hierarchy designed by the Japanese colonial administrators showed the Japanese at the top level. Next came, those Koreans and Okinawans who emigrated to the South Seas as farm-

7. *The Preparatory Guidelines for Recruiting Korean Soldiers* (朝鮮徵兵準備讀本), supervised by the Media office of the Joseon Troops (朝鮮軍報道部), (Utsumi Aiko and Tanabe Hisao 1983: 51). Micronesia was viewed as a distant paradise, conceived as being literally in the South Pacific, and inhabited by primitive peoples not much different than “savages”—naked, sensuous, and dark-skinned (Peattie 1988: 216). The Japanese people’s perception of the Indonesian people could not have been so different from this.

ers, fishermen, and laborers. Micronesians were regarded as being different from other imperial subjects in terms of status by the Japanese government and were always viewed as lesser peoples in the Empire.⁸ In fact the bonds that held Micronesians to Japan were made of straw, not steel, and were quickly sundered apart in the first gusts of adversity. The relationship was too inequitable, too unjust to have been made of stronger sinew (Peattie 1988: 111-12).

Under this system that chose to foster mistrust and hostility among neighboring nations and peoples, the factor that determined the ranks within the hierarchy was the order of being subsumed into the Japanese realm of power, and such a characteristic very much resembled the typical chain of command inside the military. In the Manchurian area, the Joseon people were treated with respect as second to the Japanese, thus the Chinese were treated with lesser respect than the Joseon people. Among regions which were assimilated into the Japanese realm at virtually the same time, the level of influence they had determined their rank within the Japanese hierarchy structure. Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia were ample examples of that.⁹ The Japanese were trying to utilize all the resources of the peoples of Asia and mobilize them in their effort to create the so-called Greater East Asia. And in cases of necessity, the Japanese also considered temporary or permanent relocations of particular peoples (Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai 1995: 79-80), as viable options.

Considering the relationship between Japan and other countries in East Asia to have been a relationship completely tainted with only hostility and misunderstanding would be over-simplifying the case. The relationships between Japan

8. Within this category of "third class people," Japanese colonial policy made further ethnic distinctions (Peattie 1988: 112).

9. The issue of overseas Chinese was one of the most important issues in the discussion committed to the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, and was therefore hotly debated. Overseas Chinese could not be ignored considering the size of the population and their economic capabilities. They were a powerful rival of Japan in terms of commerce and merchandise, and was an important client of Japan as well. They had maintained a strong network and also a powerful sense of unity and resisted the Japanese advance while maintaining a unique relationship with the Chungching administration of China. So to Japan, it was not an easy opponent to deal with. The discussion committee for the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere decided that considering the various situations the overseas Chinese population were representing, it would be wise not to employ a single policy for various situations, and it would be especially important to employ active control and utilization in dealing with the economically powerful individuals or groups within the overseas Chinese society, instead of just letting them do their businesses (Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai 1995: 80-81).

and other countries were usually pretty complicated in terms of region and rank, and featured a quality that would make generalization a bit difficult. At the level of the general population, there were indeed unique responses to the Japanese people. For example, in Indonesia the general population did not resent the Japanese. In Indonesia, where small-scale merchants such as people engaged in apothecaries or grocery businesses occupied a huge portion inside the population, and the Japanese people, unlike the Japanese in Manchuria or China, did not enjoy any kind of privileges or special interests and only cooperated with the Indonesian aboriginal people (Oketani Hideaki 1991: 254). In the early days of the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia when Japanese troops first entered the region, the general response from the population of the would-be colonized areas was friendly and welcoming. Especially, the people in Burma, Indonesia, and The Philippines passionately and also willingly welcomed Japanese troops (Takeuchi Yoshimi et al. 1963: 11-12). It was also true that after the initial occupation and also after it became clear that Japan was going to rule Indonesia, people who were betting their future and fates upon the welfare of the Japanese in fact increased, just like there had been increases of such people in Joseon as well. People started to learn Japanese, and especially among high class society members, the desire to form marital relationships with the people of the Netherlands was replaced by the desire to have such relationship with the Japanese, who were the new rulers of Indonesia (Kikakuin 1942: 39-40; Peattie 1988: 219).

In the meantime, the general media of the Japanese homeland, which broadcast War news and aired war-theme motion pictures, was only showing the Japanese population selected scenes of Southeast Asian populations welcoming Japanese troops and did not relay other kinds of responses. It was only after the War that the general population of Japan was made aware of the fact that the people of the Philippines extremely hated the Japanese (Takeuchi Yoshimi et al. 1963: 11). Media control overseen by the Japanese government and military prevented the the East Asian peoples from interacting with each other. But even if such interaction had been enabled at the time, anti-war movements launched by non-governmental organizations and other civilian activities as seen nowadays would probably not have been possible. Just as the desire to learn and master the Japanese language that prevailed in Indonesia was another attempt to improve oneself for one's own personal interests, the war had to mean something for the Japanese population as well. In the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, it was the event of sugar distribution that attracted the Japanese population, and

the students who spent their youths in colonized Joseon still remember rubber balls being distributed to them when Singapore was being occupied.¹⁰ Including the population newly assimilated into the imperial realm, and of course including the Joseon people, the general population in the Japanese homeland was hardly ever interested in the public living status of occupied regions, or their emotions, sentimentalities, or political awareness.¹¹ All in all, people were truly indifferent, and cold beings. The reason that the Japanese general population actively cooperated with the Japanese government and the military's mobilization process for the task of creating the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and liberating the East Asian region was because they were "thrilled" with the unusual elements of wartime emergency situations,¹² and also because they were hoping that something would be gained by victory in the War and the expansion of the empire.

If we turn to the (semi)colonial regions, the situation was much more complicated. In China, conflicting elements featured themselves against each other at the same time such as passionate Nationalism and also sentiment resenting such ideology, the sentimentality resenting Anglo-Saxon qualities, cultural pluralism, and the concept of universality transcending Nationalism (Gerow 2002: 141). In the "Greater East Asian movie," which was a war-propaganda motion picture made by the Japanese, the Japanese colonizers were to fear and wonder whether the faces of the Manchurian people who did not reveal their own thoughts represented acceptance of what that the Japanese were trying to insert into their minds, or represented resistance against them. Especially, the sardonic smiles of

10. During the occupation of Java, the Japanese government executed the special distribution of sugar and tried to leave the public with the impression that if Java were successfully acquired then sugar would be at everyone's disposal. Oil stoves were hard to find as oil was a strategic tool for the War and so a product such as oil should not have much to do with ordinary life. What were really favorable for the people in ordinary life was sugar (Takeuchi Yoshimi et al. 1963: 10).

11. In the cases of Burma, Indonesia, and India some ordinary Japanese citizens really believed that they were helping locals peoples in gaining their independence and that the Japanese were fighting for the liberation of Asia. In this vein, Utsumi Aiko and Tanabe Hisao (1983: 242-243) mentioned the catchphrase saying "This is it, keep up the pace, Ghandi! I'm coming..." a slogan designed by an employee working at a car sales company who was dispatched to Burma during the war.

12. Utsumi Aiko and Tanabe Hisao (1983: 230) recorded that it is easy to surmise that the general population could have been thrilled by war news coming from the radio broadcasts and newspapers, and the marches decorated with flags and lights.

the spectators could have been the result of their own realization of the low-rated nature of Japanese movies but also Japan's contradictory nature of fighting Americans while also transferring the American motion pictures into a viewable format for the Japanese people (Gerow 2002: 145). In Joseon, there was also critical opinion regarding the situation of being mobilized to the frontlines, as such a situation was considered to be ensuring meaningless death and also cooperating with an unjust war of invasion. But on the other hand, there had been passionate support for victory in the War and the East Asian liberation campaign as well. Underneath the layer, there had been indifferent, passive attitudes of ordinary peoples as well.

As we can see, although all the regions, peoples, and ranks inside the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere were being controlled by the Japanese style of divide and rule, there was one thing that was binding them together. Their common enemy was established as the Western powers, and especially resentment against the Western enemies was amplified by the anti-U.S. campaign generated and supported by the Japanese government and the military. For example, in the Philippines' case, the military general of the Imperial Guard issued a total of six orders regarding the issue of education on February 17th, 1942 instructing the authorities and the public to eliminate old ways of thinking and become independent from the U.S. and the U.K., to nurture a new culture for the Philippines, and to join in the task of expanding the usage of the Japanese language and banning the usage of English. Also, an approval committee for official textbooks to serve as a censorship mechanism for published textbooks was organized with Filipino specialists and the Japanese as enlisted members. The Japanese who took control of the committee arbitrarily dropped portions that were deemed inappropriate from textbooks, most of which were themes related to the U.S.¹³ The situation in Malaysia was not so different. All the U.S. related schools were re-designated as official primary schools and the Japanese language replaced English (Utsumi Aiko and Tanabe Hisao 1983: 180).

In May 1943, as U.S. troops started to set foot upon the regions previously colonized by Japan the situation turned to the worse for the Japanese, and a deterioration on Japanese morale began to show in Japanese propaganda, which

13. For example, "The Philippines' flag and the American flag," "The Philippines commonwealth government," "The Birthday of George Washington," and "The currency and gauge system of America" could be enumerated (Utsumi Aiko and Tanabe Hisao 1983: 138-140).

started to lack certain expressions like "The Light of Asia, Japan," a catchphrase that was usually used to emphasize Japan's capability and dignity.¹⁴ Instead, racist conflicts and hostility were promoted even more.¹⁵ From radio broadcasts being heard in the cities or villages of Indonesia, the slogan designed by Sukarno was being shouted, "Amerika Kita Setrika Ingelis Kita Linggis" (Tramp the Americans, Destroy the British) or "Let's work! Work! Work! Let's unite our spirit and our strength to destroy the allied forces!" The sentimentality of a so-called "Mobilization society," the Japanese society as it was, which blamed the British and Americans, boosted the war and prevailed in Java society (Utsumi Aiko and Tanabe Hisao 1983: 220-21).

The Case of Korea, and the Contradiction of Colonial Ideology

The self-contradictory nature of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in

14. In March 1942, the Japanese military completed occupation of most of the regions in Indonesia, including Java, and initiated military governing. Also, under the direction of the propaganda office, which included various artists among its members, the so-called 3A movement was initiated as well. 3A referred to "The Light of Asia, Japan, the Guard of Asia, Japan, and the Leader of Asia, Japan." This movement was first initiated by overseas Chinese and some Indonesians without the intervention of the Japanese military government. Soon, it was organized by the Japanese, and they started to publish an official magazine entitled "Asia Raya". The movement spread throughout the entire Java area and local branches were also established, effectively propagating the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. This movement was utilized by the colonial officials from the Netherlands occupation era as a method of collaborating with the colonial authorities. Joining was strongly recommended and thus caused resentment on the residents' part, and the Nationalists did not approve such forced requests for the movement itself that proposed cooperating with the military government. Moreover, the Japanese military government and the military police were concerned of the possibility of the movement turning into an independence movement, so they remained critical of the movement itself. As a result, this movement, which was mocked by the people as a "comic incident with Indonesians as puppet actors" was eventually resolved (Hashikawa Bunsô 1977: 306; Utsumi Aiko and Tanabe Hisao 1983: 219-220).

15. As we can see, racism was an effective tool for the Japanese in their fight with the Americans. But officially, Japan was also trying not to let its intentions appear as so obvious. Inside the so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, they were aware of the fact that as the War was meant to liberate the East Asian region, and because of such nature of the War, there was high possibility that it would indeed turn into a racist one. But considering the relationship with the allies of Germany and Italy, and out of strategic considerations for Anglo-Saxon enemies, they did not want the Greater East Asian war to be interpreted as a racist war (Sumiya Etsuji 1942: 200; Soryokusen Kenkyujo 1942: 134).

terms of the national question was sharply revealed through the relationship that Japan had established with colonized countries, such as Joseon or Taiwan. Japan had forced itself into an ironic situation in which it had to own colonies while denying the concept of them at the same time. Neither from postwar studies looking at the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, nor from the discussions that were going on at the time, can we find any kind of discussion of the Joseon situation.

From the decision-making process of the Japanese government at the time, we can see that the Joseon matter was a very sensitive issue that was found hard for many people to discuss in an appropriate fashion. On February 10th, 1942, according to the agendas established for the Discussion Committee of Establishing the Greater East Asia realm by the Cabinet, the Governor Generals of Joseon and Taiwan were initially granted the authority to attend the conference and express their opinions. But according to the regulations established and announced on February 21st, 1942 that grant was denied (Akashi Yoji and Ishii Hitoshi 1995: 2). The Discussion committee of establishing the Greater East Asia realm was soon organized, and in the 3rd session “he Population and the National Policies entailed by the establishment of the Greater East Asia” was selected as the primary agenda. In this session, regarding the options that should be explored in order to expand the Yamoto race (the Japanese), the issue of the Joseon people was cited as a very important one. Most of the committee members argued that “the matter should be dealt with, with caution, and as a separate case,” so the issue was dropped from the agenda (Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai 1995: 68).

Then, what was the status of Joseon or Taiwan in the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere? There have been multiple opinions suggested upon this issue. One way of addressing the issue should have been acknowledging the existence of colonial rule while also trying to solve the problem gradually. In this context, it was declared that the diplomatic matters of the protectorates (or other entities for that matter) inside the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, should be dealt with by the Japanese, but the desire for the independence of each nation should be realized considering an appropriate type of polity according to the political and economic requests, or the historical, political and cultural facts of each region, which were needed in binding and uniting the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere (Soryokusen Kenkyujo 1942: 16, 80). Shigemitsu Mamoru (重光葵), then-foreign minister in April 1943, is said to have considered once granting political independence and autonomous control

to Joseon and Taiwan while also preparing to grant Indonesia independence as the war situation was rapidly deteriorating for the Japanese in the Southeast Asian region (Okazaki Hisahiko 2000: 254). But right up until the end of the war, the Japanese continued to use the Malaysia peninsula and Indonesia as part of their imperial realm, and they did not let go Joseon and Taiwan (Ono Ken'ichi 1992: 272).

On the other hand, another option should have been, other than gradually attempting to bridge the gap between doctrine and reality, defining the doctrine more strictly. Accordingly, it was declared that a region or its people that was not a nation-state could not be considered as an independent member of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, and should only be considered as a member of the nation-state to which it belonged. This position led to the fact that the official units composing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere were not ethnic groups but independent states, so the protectorates should participate in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere in subordinated forms to the host country (Kokusaku Kenkyukai Jimukyoku: 41, 4-22).

This matter was also discussed in the third session of the Discussion Committee for the Establishment of the Greater East Asia, which held the national issue as the primary agenda. The chairman, the Health Minister, solicited opinion on whether Koreans were fully assimilated-Japanese or should be regarded as somewhat distinguished from the Japanese. One committee member expressed a general opinion saying that the Joseon people, who were living inside the imperial realm, should be regarded as imperial subjects. Nonetheless, he added that the Joseon people should also be distinguished from the Japanese in the homeland. He also tried to distinguish the Joseon people living in Manchuria or the U.S.S.R. from those living in the Joseon peninsula (Kikakuin and Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai ed. 1995: 109-110). In other words, he was saying that the Joseon people living inside the Joseon peninsula should be considered as imperial subjects just like the Japanese proper, but should be distinguished at some level from other Joseon people living in other regions such as Manchuria or Russia.¹⁶

The issue of the Joseon people was also discussed with regard to the subject of industrial bases. One committee member questioned exactly what kind of industries were going to be established inside Joseon, which was being consid-

16. For detailed discussion on this issue, see Kim Keong-il (2003: 355).

ered as part of the Empire. The Chairman, the Commerce Minister, answered that “Joseon and Taiwan are considered as part of the Empire, and related matters are being considered on such terms.” In other words, Japan was considering Joseon and Taiwan as entities included in the same group with Japan, and Manchuria with China in another group, and they intended to develop each region on the basis of its characteristics (Daitoa Kensetsu Shingikai 1995: 203). Joseon was considered as part of the Empire itself along with Taiwan, and for that reason Joseon was excluded from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Greater East Asia Realm that was established in November 1942, along with the Japanese homeland, Taiwan, and Sakhalin (Akashi Yoji and Ishii Hitoshi 1995: 2).

Ozaki Hotsumi, who advocated the theory of the East Asian Cooperation Community also thought that the issue of Joseon and Taiwan nationalism was part of the Japanese Empire, and he examined how much these peoples had been assimilated into it. He speculated that the issue of Joseon nationalism would not become a major one as long as the Japanese adhered to the ultimate cause of establishing the Empire, and it would not be necessary to employ an artificial policy of assimilation (Ozaki Hotsumi 1962: 65). In other words, he was expecting that Joseon would be fully assimilated into the Japanese Empire to the extent of no longer requiring any kind of policy to ensure that. His opinion represents a stark contrast from the critical attitude toward the Japanese policies on nationalism in Southeast Asian countries. Joseon and the Southeast Asian countries were all the same colonies, yet he chose to regard them in different terms. This kind of dual attitude was in itself a vivid demonstration of the ideological shortcomings of the Japanese critical intellectuals at the time and their perception of the colonies.

As we can see, in the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, Japan was considering the status of the colonized Joseon in several different ways, but in essence, Japan was maintaining that Joseon was part of the Empire and therefore not a colony. But considering the history of modern colonies and the fact that colonies in Asia and Africa were colonized as peoples or tribes instead of being ruled as nation-states, there was no line that could be drawn between the logic of Western countries colonization and that of the Japanese. The Japanese tried to establish a logical basis for their strict assimilation policy targeted at Joseon or Taiwan, countries which did not go through the colonization process of Western countries but were directly integrated into the Japanese Empire. But unfortunately, the whole purpose was only for the extraction of resources and the mobilization of soldiers, and was not meant for the survival or

prosperity of Joseon people.¹⁷

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17. According to the mobilization plans for resources during wartime, the Manchurian area and Joseon were designated as "supplementary systems for the Japanese empire," and thus, Joseon, the ambitious "five-year plan for the industrial development of Manchuria" was abandoned (Yamamoto Yuzo 1996: 570). Also, abiding by the principle of "utilizing other peoples and countries inside the East Asian sphere for defense reasons," the Joseon and Taiwan peoples were to be mixed and integrated into the Japanese army, thus obligatory military service was officially required of them. The total number was projected to be 5% of the entire population, which amounted to 1.5 million Joseon soldiers, and 0.5 million Taiwan soldiers (Soryokusen Kenkyujo 1942: 15, 196). Based upon this estimate, the Japanese government and the cabinet decided to initiate drafting soldiers in Joseon in May 1942, and announced it in March 1943 (the actual draft was initiated on August 1st).

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