

# The "Japan Times" Extra.

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Tokyo, Monday, August 29, 1910.

## JAPAN AND KOREA MADE ONE.

THE EMPEROR OF JAPAN REIGNS OVER CHOSEN NOW.

FOREIGN INTERESTS IN KOREA RECEIVE FULL PROTECTION.

### DECLARATION.

Notwithstanding the earnest and laborious work of reforms in the administration of Korea, in which the Governments of Japan and Korea have been engaged for more than four years since the conclusion of the Agreement of 1905 the existing

foreign as well as Japanese, will there be admitted and goods may be imported into and exported from those ports.

### THE TEXT OF THE TREATY OF ANNEXATION.

Treaty, and have affixed thereto their seals.

Viscount MARAKATA TERAUCHI,  
Resident-General.

The 22nd day of the 8th month of the 43rd year of Meiji.

YE WAN YONG,  
Minister President of State,

arrangement, telegraphed to the Japanese Government in the evening of the 20th the final draft of the Treaty of Annexation, and requested that it be submitted to His Majesty the Emperor of Japan for approval. His Majesty referred it to the Privy Council which specially met on the 22nd, and Imperial sanction was then

Dawn of an era: The front-page headline of this special edition of The Japan Times on Monday, Aug. 29, 1910, describes that day's promulgation of the Treaty of Annexation signed on Aug. 22 between Japan and Korea. In the vernacular of the day, the sub-title refers to Korea as Chosen, while just below is a sign of foreign complicity.

## Uneasy neighbors across the sea

### Japan's colonial rule in Korea between 1910 and 1945 has left open wounds that are still far from being healed

August 22 is the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Annexation between Japan and Korea that came into effect on Aug. 29, 1910 — commemorated now in North and South Korea as a day of shame.

It is 65 years since colonial rule ended, but the scars of the past have not healed and bilateral relations remain vexed by history. Numerous apologies by Japanese politicians, and one by Emperor Akihito in 1990, have been undone by discordant voices of denial and unrepentant justification. These mixed messages reflect a lack of consensus in Japan about its colonial era. They also help explain why Koreans remain seething and indignant,



Fighting on: Former Korean "comfort women" forced to serve the Japanese military during World War II protest in Seoul in 2007, demanding compensation from Japan. AP PHOTO

unconvinced by Japan's sincerity and unwilling to extend a hand to the perpetrator.

## **Apology politics**

On Aug. 10, 2010, Prime Minister Naoto Kan issued an apology to South Korea regarding colonial rule, expressing deep regret over the suffering inflicted, stating, "The people of South Korea at the time were deprived of their nation and culture, and their ethnic pride was deeply harmed by colonial rule against their will." The head of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan added, "Those who render pain tend to forget it while those who suffered cannot forget it easily."

Although more specific about Japanese transgressions in Korea, and helpfully forthright on the issue of wounded ethnic pride, the apology was to South Korea alone, neglecting North Korea. Kan's statement drew heavily on the so-called 1995 Murayama Statement (by Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama on Aug. 15, 1995), which has become a mantra for subsequent Japanese expressions of remorse about its rampage through Asia. It was also similar to the 2005 Koizumi Statement issued on the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II by then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.sk

Thus the peevish criticism of Kan by the opposition Liberal Democratic Party (to which Koizumi belonged, while Murayama was leader of the LDP's coalition partner, the Japan Socialist Party) smacks of hypocrisy.

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2006-07), for instance, took off the gloves, ridiculing Kan's statement as "foolish" and "ignorant" — strong words from someone who speaks with authority on both charges.

Abe, during his brief tenure as premier and LDP leader, became an object of derision when he quibbled about the level of coercion involved in recruiting teenage Korean girls as so-called wartime comfort women — and a national punching-bag when he tried to rewrite and sanitize the history of the Battle of Okinawa in 1945 and the role of Japanese troops in instigating group "suicide" by Okinawans.sk

Perhaps Kan feels vindicated that the nationalist goon squad is offended.

Kan also agreed to "transfer" Korean court records regarding that country's imperial protocol to the government of the Republic of Korea (South Korea), responding to a longstanding request for the return of many cultural treasures taken by Japan from the peninsula. Kan avoided the word "return" so as not to raise expectations about compensation or undermine Tokyo's position that the 1965 Treaty of Normalization (between Japan and South Korea) has resolved all indemnity issues.

The Kan Statement thus aimed to put historical issues behind the two countries and focus on the future, but there is little chance Koreans will let Japan off the hook of history even if they do appreciate the sentiments. No apology could ever be enough, as Koreans cling to past injustices as part of their national identity and value actions above words.

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Christian Caryl, contributing editor to the journal *Foreign Policy*, argues that, ". . . part of the problem is a Korean nationalism that is built around a deep-seated notion of Korean victimhood. Koreans need to get over this if they're ever going to have a healthy relationship with their neighbors."

On Aug. 15, celebrated throughout Korea as Liberation Day from colonial rule, President Lee Myung Bak this year focused on reunification of the peninsula, but did laud Kan's remarks about colonialism being imposed against the will of the Koreans. He added, "The two nations should never forget history, while at the same time working together to develop a new kind of future."

Foreign Minister Yu Myung Hwan praised Kan's apology and quoted British statesman and writer Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965), who said, "If we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find we have lost the future."

Conservative Japanese call for an end to masochistic history and endless apologies, preferring a vindicating, airbrushed history. But overall, few Japanese seek refuge in such a glorifying narrative, understanding there is little dignity in denial.

Former Ambassador Kazuhiko Togo states, "I don't think that Japan suffers from apology fatigue nor is the Japanese people's willingness to do more exhausted. There is a big hole in the Murayama Statement. He acknowledged that Japan did bad things, including aggression and colonial rule, but did not determine who was responsible, and as long as this issue remains unanswered, reconciliation will not proceed."

Another Japanese expert on Korea (who requested anonymity) observes that "Japan must be made to perpetually apologize and there can be no resolution and no gesture can ever be enough."

As the victims, the Korean governments are in a position to decide how to deal with the colonial past, and they see few incentives in reconciliation. Given that apologies are offered, but shunned, and gestures of contrition never quite measure up, the odds against reconciliation are high.

Rather than seeking a dramatic breakthrough, several experts told this writer that Japan should pursue concrete measures dealing with issues such as forced labor, comfort women, school textbooks, Yasukuni Shrine and the disputed islands of Dokdo/Takeshima, as they are known in Korea and Japan, respectively.

Pursuing this agenda is the best chance of giving some momentum to a healing process that may eventually create an opening. Not to do so will only prolong the stalemate.

## Past and present

A former Korean student of mine pointed out that earlier this year the South Korean government decided to initiate a change in pedestrian traffic patterns by exhorting people to walk on the right. Apparently there are good scientific reasons for this in terms of easing traffic flow, but the government wanted to ensure maximum compliance, which is not easy when it comes to getting people to shed deeply ingrained habits.sk

Tellingly, the campaign highlighted the fact that walking on the left is a colonial legacy and a continuing custom in Japan — so ensuring that many people are complying with this Big Brotherish intrusion as a matter of principle.

If the art of diplomacy depends on finding common ground, what would one call the art of evading commonalities?

In 2006, Prime Minister Abe launched the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, aimed at containing the spread of Chinese influence in the region. The ostensible idea was that Asian nations with shared values such as democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law and market-oriented economic policies could make common cause. The regional reaction ranged from lukewarm suspicion to yawning indifference.



Win-win: The Pukkwon Victory Monument to Korean victories over invading Japanese in 1592-94 is seen in the National Museum of Korea in Seoul in 2005 after being returned by Japan some 30 years after it was "found" at Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. KYODO PHOTO

However, a curious omission from Abe's Arc was South Korea, arguably one of the region's most vigorous democracies, and with all the right values. A Japanese Foreign Ministry official explained away the Korea-sized hole in the Arc by saying it never applied to join! Nor, he failed to add, had any of the other nations included in this Japanese-designed Arc.

This centennial of Japanese colonialism in Korea is no time for a by-gones-be-by-gones festival of rapprochement between countries that often glower at each other across the body of water laying between them that each designates differently — as the Sea of Japan and the East Sea.

The perception gap remains a chasm, with a recent NHK/KBS poll indicating that 62 percent of Japanese have positive attitudes toward South Korea, while 70 percent of South Koreans have negative attitudes toward Japan. It is revealing that Japanese associate South Korea with a now-popular soap-opera actor, while South Koreans cite Hirobumi Ito when they think of Japan; light-hearted pop versus heavy history.

Ito was Japan's first prime minister (1885-88) and was Resident General of Korea from 1906-09. In November 1909, four months after he stood down from that post, a Korean independence activist named Ahn Jung Geun assassinated him in Harbin, Manchuria. Ironically, Ito and Ahn in some respects shared a view of East Asian cooperation as the only means to counter the "white peril" of Western imperialism.sk

Kazuhiko Togo, currently a professor at Kyoto Sangyo University, visited the museum established in Seoul to honor Ahn, and came away impressed by his vision.

Togo said, "His prison memoirs are breathtaking and amazing. He was a real Korean patriot. He hoped his act would lead to liberation and sought to realize trilateral cooperation between Korea-China-Japan. After reading his memoirs I came away with great respect. How could we have executed such a man with such an incredible vision?"

"If Koreans today shared his vision they should be able to accept our apology."

## **Normalization**

There is no shortage of issues dividing the Koreas and Japan, and habits of recrimination remain resilient on the Korean Peninsula because there is a sense that Japan has not fully taken the measure of the torments it inflicted during the colonial era, nor atoned sufficiently for them.



## Uneasy neighbors across the sea

### Japan's colonial rule in Korea between 1910 and 1945 has left open wounds that are still far from being healed

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The 1965 treaty normalizing relations between South Korea and Japan is often invoked by the Japanese government as evidence it has not neglected this shared past. It also points to the \$800 million in loans and aid it provided then as a concrete gesture of contrition. Tokyo cites the 1965 agreement to fend off individual claims for reparations, arguing that the South Korean government was obliged to distribute a portion of the settlement to individuals and that further claims were waived.

Koreans counter that at that time Tokyo withheld information regarding forced labor, and the comfort-women issue was buried until the 1990s, so the waiver does not pertain to these claims.sk

Given that South Korea was a military dictatorship until the late 1980s, and civil rights were routinely suppressed under a succession of generals, the Japanese legal position may be solid, but it is also politically awkward.

In 2005, the South Korean government released the normalization negotiation documents, sparking public fury and highlighting the difficulties of relying solely on a legalistic approach to the extremely emotional issues of colonial subjugation. The reality of a lingering, widespread sense of injustice among Koreans makes Japanese assertions that the 1965 treaty can be a lockbox for history little more than wishful thinking.

### Compensating forced labor

Togo contends that Japanese companies and the government now have a chance to live up to their moral responsibility regarding claims for forced-labor



Martyr's day: Children in Seoul at a memorial service in 2005 for Ahn Jung Geun, who opposed Japan's rule in Korea and in 1909 assassinated former Japanese Prime Minister Hirobumi Ito soon after he stood down as Resident General of Korea. KYODO PHOTO

compensation.

He states, "In May 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that neither the Japanese government or companies bear any legal liability and are not criminally responsible for forced labor, but I think that this opens up an opportunity to consider the moral point of view.

"It behooves Japan to establish a joint fund by government and the private sector to provide individual compensation to victims . . . but the problem is determining the criteria and which victims are eligible."

Seizing this chance may not be easy, because it has implications for Chinese forced laborers, POWs and others who seek individual compensation. But this year Mitsubishi has agreed to compensate some 300 conscripted Korean women workers at its wartime Nagoya aircraft factory.sk

According to William Underwood, a U.S. historian with a doctorate in political science from Kyushu University, who has conducted groundbreaking research into the forced-labor issue, this decision, "is potentially Copernican . . . the big factors were the committed demonstrations against Mitsubishi in Seoul and Tokyo and well-coordinated transnational activism at the community level. Then there was a petition signed by more than 130,000 South Korean citizens and 100 members of the National Assembly, and talk of a boycott, that put this effort over the top. It is hard to see how Mitsubishi will now draw a line between the *teishintai* (Conscripted Women's Brigade) and other Korean citizens conscripted into working for its various companies. A Mitsubishi program for compensating its former labor conscripts would up the ante for other companies to follow suit."

Underwood also finds it encouraging that, in March 2010, the Japanese government finally provided "the long-sought civilian name rosters and payroll records that the South Korean government needs to carry out its own program for compensating former conscripts and their descendants."

Why it took 65 years to do so speaks volumes about Japan's mishandling of reconciliation, and why Koreans remain so resentful.



However, standing in the way of compensation is the unawareness and denial in Japan concerning forced labor and abuses. It is astonishing, Underwood says, that, during the time he was prime minister (2008-09), the LDP's Taro Aso "could contend, with media support, that the

10,000 Koreans at Aso Mining (his family's firm in Kyushu during World War II) were well treated and not unduly coerced. The Japanese media, which rarely covers the vigorous activism within Japanese society that seeks to resolve historical issues . . . barely covered the Mitsubishi announcement. It is also amazing that the Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) has been able to completely ignore the myriad claims upon Japanese industries by taking a *mokusatsu* (ignore with contempt) stance, especially in this age of corporate social responsibility and despite Keidanren's charter on ethics valuing human rights."sk

Underwood also points out that a comprehensive settlement of forced- labor compensation is complicated by claims of conscripts from North Korea, with which Japan does not have diplomatic relations. Unlike with South Korea, there are no treaty waivers.

Underwood proposes that the Japanese government release the money — including mandatory "patriotic" savings, wage arrears, end-of-work allowances, death and disability benefits — that deterred conscript workers from fleeing. That money was transferred by Japanese companies to the national treasury between 1945 and '48.

Further, Underwood suggests that those funds be used to build twin memorial museums to conscript labor in Busan (South Korea) and Fukuoka (Kyushu), the ports through which most of those workers passed. According to Underwood, an "air of mystery still surrounds the unpaid wages" and the Japanese government has not indicated what it intends to do with the money — adding, "and the hapless Japanese media has never asked."

Since the money cannot be returned to the conscripts or their relatives without setting a precedent and undermining the 1965 treaty waiver, Underwood suggests this would be a worthy use of the money, although there are North Korean claims to worry about.

## **Yasukuni Shrine**

This past summer, one of my Korean students recalled how Junichiro Koizumi's six visits while prime minister to Yasukuni Shrine in central Tokyo had left an indelible impression.

When the news of his first such visit to this iconic Shinto shrine was announced in 2001, she recalled that her teacher stopped the class and shared his anger, explaining why such visits are intolerable.sk

To be educated in Korea, evidently, is to have no doubt about the evils of Japanese colonialism — and Yasukuni Shrine is seen as a talismanic symbol of



an unrepentant view of that imperialism. While there is much media attention focusing on the 14 Class-A war criminals that were secretly enshrined there in 1978, and on the adjacent Yushukan Museum that promotes a vindicating version of Japan's 20th-century depredations, Koreans are also incensed that some of their countrymen have been enshrined there without permission.

Given that many Koreans in the Imperial armed forces were forced to serve, and were subsequently stripped of any veterans' benefits, the enshrinement at Japan's ground zero for nationalism only adds insult to injury. Before the end of World War II, 415 Korean conscripts were enshrined at Yasukuni, but beginning in 1958, an additional 21,000 Korean souls were enshrined without permission and without bereaved families being notified.

Curiously, from a constitutional point of view regarding the separation of state and religion (as stipulated in Article 20 of the Constitution), the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare provided the list of war dead to this private religious facility that was used for the Koreans' enshrinement. The government's evasive justifications notwithstanding, its role in facilitating deification breached the Constitution and, in many cases, offended bereaved families.<sup>sk</sup>

For its part, Yasukuni Shrine has officially explained that the Koreans were actually Japanese at the time they died and thus remain so after they died. Alas, enshrinement is something of a consolation prize as this logic has not helped any Korean veterans or their survivors obtain pensions after the government rescinded their Japanese nationality following World War II.



Doing penance: Japanese scholars visiting Namyangju in northern South Korea in July 2007 pay their respects and apologize for the past at the tomb of Empress Myeongseong, Queen Min, as she is known, was assassinated by Japanese zealots in 1895. KYODO PHOTO

However, the shrine maintains that the Koreans were enshrined also, "because they fought and died believing that they would be enshrined as deities of the Yasukuni Shrine when they die as Japanese soldiers."

Perhaps, but this argument has not convinced many Koreans about the virtues of soul-snatching.

In 2007, an octogenarian veteran named Kim Hee Jong was surprised to find that he was enshrined at Yasukuni and notified authorities that he was still alive and wanted his soul back. But apparently that was an exorcism too far.

In 2001, relatives of enshrined Koreans sued the government to expunge the

names and liberate the souls of their deceased relatives from Yasukuni, arguing that "the souls of the victims, who were forcibly mobilized and were killed during Japanese colonial rule, were enshrined as deities for the war of aggression — against the religion of the victims themselves and the will of the bereaved families — and have been violated for over a half century." That case was dismissed in 2006, with the judge falling back on the 1965 treaty and justifying the handover of names to the shrine as ordinary administrative procedure.sk

Consequently, in 2007 relatives sued the shrine directly for inappropriate consecration, and are seeking an apology and ¥1 as symbolic compensation.

Taiwanese have also had no success in gaining dis-enshrinement for the straightforward reason that shrine officials do not want to set a precedent.

In resisting pressure from some quarters to remove the Class-A war criminals, one of the shrine's main "attractions," priests there maintain that deification is a one-way ticket. Purging the shrine of colonial souls might open the floodgates for other restless souls and shift attention to establishing a national war cemetery without Yasukuni's historical baggage.

### **Islands of eternal dispute**

A French whaling ship, *Le Liancourt*, was nearly wrecked in 1849 on a cluster of 90 islets and reefs located between the Korean Peninsula and Japan — explaining why they are known to some as the Liancourt Rocks. The Rocks comprise twin, jagged islets surrounded by outcrops and reefs that both Japan and South Korea claim, referring to them as Takeshima and Dokdo respectively.

The South Koreans maintain a Coast Guard presence and an octopus fisherman and his wife permanently reside there.sk

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**水 TODAY**

**NATIONAL**

**Pared wish list**

The DPJ may drop some pledges in the platform that catapulted it to power last year. Prime Minister Naoto Kan said.

**ASIA-PACIFIC**

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A projected rise in temperatures because of climate change will slow the growth of rice production in Asia, a new study says.

**WORLD**

**Israeli threat**

Israel threatens to pull out of a U.N. inquiry into a deadly raid on a Turkish flotilla heading for the Gaza Strip after failing to receive agreement to send Israeli soldiers to testify.

## Kan apologizes for colonial rule of Korea

Statement just for South echoes Murayama text

### Gist of apology

Japan's colonial rule inflicted damage and suffering on the Korean people, and the Japanese government will take steps to help recover the damage and help South Koreans living in North Korea.

Japan will hold over Korean culture artifacts.

Japan and South Korea are partners working together and taking the lead for peace and prosperity in the region and the world.

We must be respectful where we need to be, and work jointly toward the next 100 years' to create a stronger bilateral relationship, Kan said.

end of the war and Japan's rule over Korea.

He thanked Lee for "maintaining a positive attitude toward strengthening bilateral ties."

"I hope today's statement will point forward such issues, and contribute to our advancement in the future," Kan said.

Unlike the past statements that were in more general geographic terms, Kan's remarks were directed specifically at South Korea, and the North.

The statement said Japan will turn over to South Korea certain confiscated cultural artifacts kept by the Imperial Household Agency, most notably a record of Korean royal ceremonies known as the Joseon Wangjo Sigun.

Kan also thanked on working through humanitarian efforts, including the recovery of the remains of Koreans in Japan.

"It is important that we build a forward-looking relationship," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Taniguchi said, adding that the Cabinet unanimously endorsed the statement.

But the message was quickly greeted by conservative as a whole, with some fearing it could anger South Koreans to demand financial compensation. Such issues came up in



Looking back, looking forward: Prime Minister Naoto Kan holds a news conference Tuesday after issuing a statement apologizing to South Korea for Japan's colonial rule of Korea.

## No Aug. 15 Yasukuni visit by Cabinet

Prime Minister Naoto Kan and all of his ministers have expressed their intention not to visit Yasukuni Shrine on Sunday, the anniversary of the end of World War II, out of respect for Asian victims of Japanese militarism.

Kan announced in June that he wouldn't visit the shrine, which honoring Japan's war dead along with war criminals as long as he is in office. Past Yasukuni visits by prime ministers triggered fierce criticism, most notably from China and South Korea.

"I clearly stated my position" on the issue after assuming office, Kan said at a news conference. "I believe my position will win people's understanding."

This will be the first anniversary of the end of the war since Kan's Democratic Party of Japan came to power. Under Liberal Democratic Party-led governments, six of

Owning up: The Japan Times' Aug. 11, 2010, front-page coverage of Prime Minister Naoto Kan's Aug. 10 speech expressing "deep remorse" and "heartfelt apology" for Japan's colonial rule in Korea. North Korea expressed resentment at being left out of the apology.

## Uneasy neighbors across the sea

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Both nations maintain that their claims are stronger and better documented, but discussion of Takeshima is relatively muted in Japan, with the exception of Shimane Prefecture which, in 2005, declared Feb. 22 to be Takeshima Day to commemorate the seizure of the islands from Korea in 1905. As a result, on that day there are now annual festivities in Matsue, the prefectural capital, attracting nationalists from around Japan who try, with little success, to stir up some primordial emotions among an indifferent public that goes about its business while their deafening "hate buses" (as Julian Dudden, a 5-year-old friend of mine calls them) blare out patriotic songs and exhortations.

In South Korea, Dokdo is a very big deal and much more than a territorial dispute. While taking the ferry to Dokdo, passengers can get in the mood by watching an anime featuring a massive



robot repelling Japanese invaders. Korea's assertion of sovereignty over Dokdo enters the realm of the sacred and is historically sound, while Japan's claim is portrayed as profane, a groundless legacy of colonial rule and Imperial arrogance.sk

However, any suggestion of submitting the rival claims to international arbitration is rejected because to do so would be tantamount, in the Korean view, to rewarding colonial aggression. While international lawyers could find some merit in the competing claims, this is to ignore the vehemence animating public discourse in Korea about the dispute that renders legal hairsplitting irrelevant, since the seizure of Dokdo in 1905 is seen as the opening act of Japanese colonial aggression and as such an unforgivable perfidy and non-negotiable.

The Japanese government is keenly aware of Korean sensitivities and, in order to avoid provoking uproar during the fraught centennial, has delayed release of the Defense White Paper because it refers to the taboo Takeshima. So what might have been a hullabaloo in August has been punted to September.

If this all seems a bit over the top, remember that in July a Korean threw a rock at the Japanese ambassador in Seoul and some South Koreans have cut off fingers to register their anger about Japan's conceit over Dokdo.

The fact that the Japanese government maintains its claims, and that middle-school textbook guidelines now require teaching about Japan's "spurious" sovereignty, outrages Koreans.sk

Togo explains, "Korea's position is that there is nothing to talk about. But in order to resolve the dispute, it is necessary to talk. Track-two efforts by academics and scholars can open discussions and it is possible to have good exchanges. There is room to learn from the confidence- building measures (CBMs) such as fishery agreements, no-visa visits and humanitarian assistance that helped change the context of negotiations between Japan and Russia regarding the (disputed) Northern Territories. CBMs can help shift perspectives and allow actors to see the situation from a different angle and break the impasse. They do not have to be islands of eternal dispute."

Perhaps, but as Christian Caryl of the journal Foreign Policy points out, "North Koreans publish their own set of Dokdo postage stamps; any smidgen of compromise by Seoul on territorial issues will immediately be seized upon by the North for its own propaganda purposes."

### **Nullification?**

At the crux of colonial controversy lies the 1910 Treaty of Annexation. Koreans maintain that the treaty was never valid, principally because it was negotiated

under coercion and there are procedural flaws and discrepancies involving the signatures and state seal on the treaty and the Imperial edict that promulgated the treaty. The 1965 Treaty of Normalization states that all treaties signed before Aug. 22, 1910 are already null and void — but the Japanese government maintains that the treaty was valid at the time it was signed until Korea's liberation in 1945.

Haruki Wada, professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo, has played a key role in pressuring the Japanese government to nullify the 1910 Treaty of Annexation. He and colleagues in Japan and South Korea have gathered more than 1,000 signatures of intellectuals from each nation on a joint statement calling for official recognition that Japanese colonialism in Korea was illegal. In doing so, the hope is to open the door for individual compensation and to raise awareness in Japan about the specific crimes of colonial rule in Korea, while igniting a wider debate about colonialism.sk

The petition also calls on the Japanese government to normalize ties with North Korea.

Alexis Dudden, author of "Japan's Colonization of Korea" (2005) and "Troubled Apologies" (2008), states that, "the point isn't whether or not the annexation was legal or illegal, but rather to understand what constituted 'legality' in 1910, thus, even though it is possible to demonstrate that the annexation was legal at the time, that doesn't mean it was 'good.' Japan's annexation of Korea was legal because forced and forged treaties, assassinations, bribes, and deceit were the colonial game. In the summer of 1907, the world sided with Japan to agree collectively that the Koreans were 'unfit to rule themselves.' "sk

And thus Korea was abandoned to Japanese violence and ambitions.

Stanford professor emeritus Peter Duus, renowned author of "The Abacus and the Sword" (1995), does not see much hope in the nullification movement, arguing, "The recent movement to have the Japanese government declare the annexation treaty 'null and void' from the start seems quixotic at best, and questionable as a matter of international law unless there is evidence that Yi Wan Yong, the Korean prime minister at the time, was bribed or signed the treaty at gunpoint. All the major world powers, the United States included, accepted the treaty as legitimate, and most thought that Korea would be better off under Japanese guidance."sk

Andrew Horvat, director of the Stanford program in Kyoto, is equally skeptical, describing the nullification movement as the polarizing equivalent of Jane Fonda going to Hanoi during the Vietnam War. Horvat argues that reconciliation depends on forging a consensus within Japan about the colonial era — one that will lead to concrete acts of contrition.sk

In his view, the nullification movement will divide domestic actors and prevent

any consensus, thereby derailing reconciliation initiatives.

Another expert (who requested anonymity) comments, "For a movement with overt political aims, its organizers' dizzying lack of political acumen on multiple fronts will likely yield unnecessary backlash to a worthy and necessary aim: historical understanding between Japan and Korea."

### **Imperial visit**

In September 2009, President Lee Myung Bak invited Emperor Akihito to visit on the occasion of the centennial, in the hope this would facilitate a future-oriented relationship. Imperial visits have played an important role in promoting reconciliation, but the government is mindful that the Emperor's 1992 visit to China was premature and did little to appease public opinion or ease tensions over history. Any incidents during a visit also carry the risk of causing a significant setback for bilateral relations.sk

Dudden suggests another option: "If Japan is serious about moving on from the so-called 'history problems' in productive and substantive ways befitting East Asia's most successful democracy, the answer lies *not* in sending Emperor Akihito to Seoul, but first in having him address the Japanese nation on television and apologizing (with a bow) to those in Asia and in Japan (in that order) whose lives were devastated by the course of the Japanese empire and war."sk

Kenneth Ruoff, author of "The People's Emperor" (2001) and "Imperial Japan at its Zenith" (2010), acknowledges that Japan was slow to own up to its wartime behavior and make amends, but thinks this has changed, "beginning with Emperor Akihito's apology to President Roh Tae Woo during his 1990 visit."

Subsequently, the Emperor made reference to his Korean ancestry, "a statement with tremendous symbolic importance because it mocked the notion that the Japanese are a 'pure' race.

"A visit, if carefully choreographed by both governments, might improve relations. The Emperor is Japan's national symbol after all, and it was also in the name of the Emperor that Japan's colonial policies were executed."

### **Prospects for reconciliation**

It won't happen soon and it may take until the centennial of liberation in 2045 before Korea (or the two Koreas) and Japan manage to alleviate the miseries of the shared past.

Mark Caprio, author of "Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea" (University of Washington, 2009), notes that colonial officials believed it would



take a century to assimilate a people they regarded as inherently inferior. The wounds of belittling and eradicating Korean cultural identity and trampling ethnic pride remain painful and healing them could take just as long.

The flawed attempt to compensate the comfort women through the Asia Women's Fund (1995-2007) helped relatively few victims (364) while stoking anger and disappointment in both nations. It was an equivocal effort over an issue demanding a grand gesture, thus provoking recrimination and underscoring how important a problem it remains for Japan. Redress is hostage to domestic politics and general heedlessness.sk

Ruoff observes, "Although more and more Japanese have a general sense that their country's colonial rule over Korea was exploitative, they still lack a sense of just how dreadful it was for Koreans." Duus also notes the lack of, "a willingness on both sides to take the other's point of view into account, but unfortunately those with extremist views often seem to speak with the loudest voices — or maybe just attract the most media attention."

And as Horvat points out, giving the Japanese their due might help, saying, "Much also depends to what degree Koreans are willing to gaze steadfast into a past in which economic progress took place in a period of national humiliation."

Howard French, former New York Times bureau chief in Tokyo and Shanghai, asserts that, "Japan's acts of reconciliation have been inadequate in scope, in terms of the weight of the language or the drama of the acts themselves . . . never rising to the level of a consensus wholly embraced among the mainstream political class.sk

"Japanese governments have come and gone, and their ardor for reconciliation has varied considerably. . . . the impression this leaves in others is of insincerity."

But, he adds, "There is a responsibility incumbent on Japan's neighbors to extend their hand of friendship, to make it easier, in effect, to make the definitive magnanimous gestures needed. This means giving up the cynical use of war issues and flag-waving to energize the base.sk

"It means accepting the idea that real reconciliation requires generosity from all parties. It requires a willingness to expend some political capital to end an unsightly and ultimately harmful state of affairs."

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