

**Rising Sun Over Namsan:  
Shintō Shrines and Tan'gun in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945**

by

Hans Ebner Sapochak Jr.

Department of Religious Studies  
Duke University

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hwansoo Ilmee Kim, Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard M. Jaffe

\_\_\_\_\_  
Leela Prasad

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of  
Religious Studies in the Graduate School  
of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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## **Abstract**

From 1868-1912, Japan underwent a rapid transformation into a modern nation state. This period of time became known as the Meiji Restoration, and practically all aspects of social and political life were affected including Japan's indigenous religious tradition Shintō. As a consequence of reform, Shintō was distilled into two broad categories—state and sect Shintō—with the former being associated with Japanese State policy and projects. In particular, State Shintō would be utilized in assimilation policy on the Korean peninsula.

In 1910, Korea was formally annexed and made a colony of Japan until Japanese defeat in 1945. During the roughly thirty-five year-long colonial era, Japanese officials sought to use state sponsored Shintō shrines as a means to transform Koreans into loyal colonial subjects. The premier Shintō shrine in Korea was the Chōsen Shrine. Chōsen Shrine was erected in 1925 and housed the spirits of the tutelary Shintō deity Amaterasu-Ōmikami and, Emperor Meiji. This decision was not without contestation however, as certain priests and the Japanese intellectual Ogasawara Shōzō (1892-1970) instead argued for the enshrinement of Korea's own progenitor god Tan'gun thinking that a native deity might make Shintō more appealing.

To examine this issue, this thesis will investigate several aspects: First, this thesis shows the development of a state sponsored Shintō and how this shaped colonial assimilation policies on the peninsula. Secondly, it examines Ogasawara's thought

behind his reason to enshrine Tan'gun in Chōsen Shrine. Thirdly, this composition explores Korean understandings of Tan'gun mythology and how this was utilized to create a Korean sense of uniqueness.

By examining these topics, I aim to reveal a Korean voice in regards to the enshrinement issue. Through this work I demonstrate that Korean agents during the Japanese occupation were able to construct their own understanding of Tan'gun through academic and religious avenues. This native agency in the matter would mean that even if Tan'gun had been enshrined, the implementation of State Shintō in assimilation efforts would still have been largely unsuccessful.

## **Dedication**

Dedicated to Dr. Brandon Palmer and his family. Without their support and kindness I never would have set foot onto Duke's campus.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1910 the Korean Prime Minister Yi Wan-yong (1858-1926) and the Japanese Resident General of Korea Terauchi Masatake (1852-1919) signed a treaty that established Korea as a colony of Imperial Japan. Korea remained a Japanese colony until Japan's defeat by the Allies in 1945.<sup>1</sup> During Korea's roughly thirty-five years as a colony, the Japanese government made extensive efforts to engineer an environment that could properly transform Koreans into loyal subjects of the Japanese emperor. One effort pursued by Japanese colonial policy in this regard was the importation of Shintō onto the Korean peninsula itself. The colonial government's actions in Korea are best understood in the religious policies of the Japanese government during the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912). Prior to the restoration, Shintō could refer to the broad spectrum of the indigenous religious practices of Japan. This period of political and social restructuring split Shintō into two broad camps: State Shintō and sectarian Shintō. The former was largely associated with state policy and ideology and the latter retained a votive nature and was not directly linked to the government.

Utilizing State Shintō, the Meiji government reconstructed the political order with the imperial family at the center; all Japanese citizens and subjects were expected to show respect and loyalty to the monarchy. The supposed genealogical lineage linking

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<sup>1</sup> Masatake served as Resident General from May to October in 1910.

the imperial family to the Shintō gods, the progenitors of the Japanese people, underlie this system and bestowed a spiritual authority upon the emperor.

Shintō also helped to define the nature of the Japanese people as well because it accounted for their origin, evolution, and—through the investment of power upon the emperor—their superior place in Asia. The distinction between Shintō and Japanese identity, in most cases, becomes difficult to distinguish. However, a purely Japanese ideology was unlikely to perform well on newly acquired Korean soil. At the end of the Second World War (1945), there were 995 Shintō shrines in Korea, including two government sponsored great shrines and eight national minor shrines. Chief amongst these was the Chōsen Shrine erected in 1925, fifteen years after Japan's colonization of Korea.

The enshrinement of Emperor Meiji and Amaterasu-Ōmikami (Amaterasu henceforth) as the central deities at the shrine ensured that this was the premier shrine in Korea. However, the selection of the shrine gods was not without contestation. In 1906 and 1925, a minority of Shintō priests and the Japanese writer Ogasawara Shōzō (1892-1970), had proposed that the native Korean progenitor god, Tan'gun, be enshrined alongside the emperor rather than Amaterasu. They had hoped Tan'gun's enshrinement would increase Shintō's popularity in Korea. In the end, the colonial government decided against the enshrinement of Tan'gun due to a fear that this might add to an

emerging Korean nationalism and that such a choice would not represent the general sentiment of Shintō priests.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding this issue there are several publications covering several approaches to the issue. Mark Caprio's book *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (2009) explores how oversights and Japanese inflexibility led to an apparent disconnect between the creation of colonial policies and their enablement on the ground level.

More focused on the Chōsen Shrine, articles by Suga Kōji and Nakajima Michio—"A Concept of 'Overseas Shintō Shrines': A Pantheistic Attempt by Ogasawara Shōzō and its Limitations" (2010) and "Shintō Deities that Crossed the Sea: Japan's 'Overseas Shrines' 1868-1945," (2010) respectively— discuss the Tan'gun controversy in some length by examining the issue from the perspective of Japanese concerns. Furthermore, these articles do not examine in great length the problems that might arise for assimilation policies.

On the other hand, Todd Henry's book *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese Rule and the Politics of Public Space in Colonial Korea, 1920-1945* (2014) provides a detailed analysis of both the Seoul and the Chōsen Shrine. He provides examples of why spiritual assimilation efforts were largely ineffective. However, Todd focuses on urban planning and provides little analysis of the exclusion of Tan'gun in this regard. Filling this gap are

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<sup>2</sup> Suga Kōji, "A Concept of 'Overseas Shinto Shrines': A Pantheistic Attempt by Ogasawara Shōzō and Its Limitations," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37, no. 1 (2010): 54.

publications by James Grayson and Hyun-key Kim Hogarth—*Myths and Legends from Korea* (2001) and *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism* (1999) respectively. Both Grayson and Hogarth effectively explore the nature of Tan'gun and some of the significant ways this mythical figure has contributed to the formation of Korean identity. However, Grayson's and Hogarth's treatment of the colonial era in this respect is relatively light.

Were the concerns of thinkers such as Ogasawara a relevant factor regarding assimilation policy? Or, was this presumptuous on their part? Would the inclusion of Tan'gun over Amaterasu have made any difference *for Koreans* in making Shintō more appealing and thus aiding in assimilation?

The purpose of this thesis then, will aim to examine the relationship between Tan'gun and the assimilation policies enabled through Chōsen Shrine from 1925-1937. By investigating the ways Koreans had historically reinterpreted their own mythic history I hope to uncover a uniquely Korean method of resisting assimilation tied to Tan'gun. To do so, I plan to investigate the innovative ways Koreans had manipulated the myth in the past in order to maintain a sense of identity and compare this with the Japanese assimilation policy facilitated through the understanding of State Shintō created during Meiji Japan. Through this I hope to demonstrate that despite Japanese assumptions, Koreans adapted their indigenous myth to a modern setting and moreover that this

could prove to be a formidable challenge to Japanese efforts regardless of inclusion in the Chōsen Shrine.

## 2. A New Sun Rises: Meiji Reconstruction of Shintō

China's defeat by the British in the first Opium War (1839-1842) shook the foundations of East Asia's Sino-centric world view and left the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) in a state of declining power. Furthermore, other ambitious colonial powers begun to carve up East Asia, spreading Western influence and power. Consequently, when Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858) returned to Japanese shores in 1854, the gates of Edo Japan (1600-1868) were opened to a rapidly changing landscape.<sup>1</sup>

It was briefly held by some Edo officials that the United States might aid in halting the colonial march across East Asia.<sup>2</sup> After all, America had declared independence from Britain in 1776 and defeated Britain again as recently as 1812. These hopes disappeared however, as it became apparent the United States also sought to obtain unfair trading agreements. For Japanese officials, it became increasingly clear that Japan's lack of modern technology compounded the danger presented by the colonial aspirations of the West. To effectively counter this threat, change would have to be made.

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<sup>1</sup> Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb, "Japan and the Transformation of the National Identities in Asia in the Imperial Era," in *Imperial Japan and National Identities in Asia, 1895-1945* (New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2003), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, "Rival States on a Loose Rein: The Neglected Tradition of Appeasement in Late Tokugawa Japan," in *The Ambivalence of Nationalism, Modern Japan Between East and West* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 34.

In 1867 the fifteenth Shōgun Tokugawa Yoshinobu (1837-1913) abdicated power to a group of reform minded samurai after they stormed the imperial palace in Kyōto.<sup>3</sup> With the shōgunate disposed, political power shifted back to the imperial line and 1868 ushered in the Meiji era. During the ensuing “restoration” Japan underwent tremendous social and political change that also affected and re-invented the notions of Shintō.

Before delving into major reforms undertaken during the Meiji period, it is prudent to briefly characterize the nature of Edo Shintō. To this end, Helen Hardacre offers three avenues of understanding pre-Meiji Shintō: organization and role, the nature of shrines, and the cloudy distinction between Shintō and Buddhism.

The structure of Edo Shintō offered no clear picture of what exactly Shintō was as a whole. Organized primarily around local deities, it lacked any general sense of unity across Japan. Furthermore, its role in imperial ritual was not nearly as exclusive as one might think since these rituals also incorporated elements of Buddhism and geomancy.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, funding for such rituals was minimal since the shōgunate put an emphasis on revering the founder of Edo—Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616)—rather than on the emperor thus limiting the grandeur of imperial ritual.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Stuart D.B. Picken, *Essentials of Shintō, An Analytical Guide to Principal Teachings* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 35-36.

<sup>4</sup> Helen Hardacre, *Shintō and The State, 1868-1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Another factor compounding this issue of organization was the nature of shrines. As mentioned above, shrines tended to be attached to local communities. As such, the majority of these shrines were centered on agricultural deities tied to a specific village often with male villagers playing the roles of priests.<sup>6</sup> The rustic nature of these shrines and the break with any organized priesthood further complicated a unified understanding of Shintō. The situation of more organized priesthoods was not much better off.

Priests belonging to larger national shrines and their associated branches often had a lineage and a better understanding of some theology associated with that particular tradition. However, two glaring problems persisted despite this. First, the transmission of knowledge by such traditions was highly secretive in nature.<sup>7</sup> This meant that not only would traditions outside of a priest's own have only a vague understanding of its associate beliefs, but the majority of parishioners were also be left in a dim theological light.

Secondly, such shrines were typically attached to a Buddhist temple as part of a greater complex.<sup>8</sup> Unlike their Shintō counterparts, Buddhist institutions were granted tremendous power by the Edo government. Through the implementation of the Temple

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 13.

Parishioner System, the Japanese populace was required to register with their local temple in order to gain a Certificate of Temple Registration to prove that they were following Buddhism rather than Christianity. This allowed the Edo government to survey the Japanese populace and keep subversive religious groups and foreign influence out of Japan, thus securing the government's hegemony.<sup>9</sup> Naturally, this gave Buddhist institutions great power and influence over their communities, and through donations and the offering of services, a lucrative means of making money. This meant that not only could Buddhists have some degree of participation in the affairs of Shintō but moreover, Shintō priests were typically subordinate to Buddhist monks.

Based on the above, the state of Edo Shintō can be characterized as a fairly unorganized mosaic of traditions and beliefs. Furthermore, these institutions were often subservient to their Buddhist counterparts. It would be this latter aspect that the Meiji government would seek to address first.

The reform minded Meiji government felt that Buddhist institutions were inhibiting the growth of the Japanese nation state.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, with the onset of the Meiji era the Meiji government dissociated itself from the Buddhist institution and, instead, instated Shintō as the state religion.

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<sup>9</sup> Hwansoo Kim, *Empire of the Dharma: Korean and Japanese Buddhism, 1877-1912* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 50.

<sup>10</sup> James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 16-18.

From this came an explicit nation-wide persecution of Buddhism fueled by the two ideas of “separation of *Kami* and Buddhas” (J. *shinbutsu bunri*) and, “Abolishing Buddhism and destroying the teachings of Shakyamuni” (J. *haibutsu kishaku*). With these threats at hand, Buddhists not only began to lose their positions of power and influence, but also experienced violence directed towards temple property and holdings.<sup>11</sup> Many of these criticisms came from outside of the tradition and were aimed at Buddhist ideology and its association with Edo Japan.

The Buddhist rejection of “the world” provided an easy way for scientific and nationalistic Japanese to criticize Buddhism. Buddhists also maintained a varied Buddhist Cosmology (Hell worlds, Pure Lands, etc.) and clung to cosmological explanations of the world (Mount Sumeru as the center of the world, for example) that flew in the face of scientific and rational reform. Modern minded Japanese wondered how a new Japanese nation could arise grounded in modern science and rationalism when such antiquated views were still being espoused by this popular institution.<sup>12</sup> Because of this antiquated thinking, Buddhism found itself on the losing end of the Meiji government’s drive to distance itself from the image of a dilapidated *bakufu* government.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kim, *Empire of the Dharma*, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

Buddhist concepts were often mixed in with government bans and sanctions against gambling, public nudity, amateur sumō wrestling, blind women minstrels, and other archaic customs. It is worth noting that, often on the same lists as the more obscure secular practices were more religiously oriented ones such as exorcisms, divination, and monk pilgrimages based on the sixty-six divisions of the Lotus Sutra.<sup>14</sup> The government attempted to paint Buddhism as a part of a previous and ignorant “wild-west,” so to speak, which kept the populace engaged in these antiquated activities. As an enlightened institution, the Meiji government had to distance itself from such an image in order to create a space that could pave the way for an enlightened and modern populace and the Meiji government’s drive for an economically-rich and militarily-strong Japan that could stand against the West.<sup>15</sup>

Despite these efforts by the government however, Buddhism’s close traditional ties to the populace made it difficult to completely stamp out. Furthermore, Buddhism’s close association to Shintō itself, left Shintō in a dubious position to adequately fill any vacuum left by such separation.<sup>16</sup> To help establish itself as an organized stand-alone

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid; Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths, Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 18 & 24.

<sup>16</sup> Hardacre, *Shintō and The State*, 28.

force, the Meiji government sought to establish Shintō institutions based on models by their rival Western nations<sup>17</sup> that could effectively propagate state ideologies.

The Department of Divinity (J. *Jingikan*) was originally established in 1868 but was downgraded in 1871 to ministry status (J. *Jingishō*) before being absorbed into the Ministry of Education (J. *Kyōbushō*) in 1872.<sup>18</sup> The declining status was indicative of Shintō's still unclear position even after the Meiji Restoration. During its existence, the Department attempted to organize shrines into a hierarchy with Ise Shrine at the top.<sup>19</sup>

This organization caused some stir concerning the deities enshrined in particular shrines. A poignant example comes from a dispute regarding the status of the deity of the Izumo Shrine, Ōkininushi-no-Mikoto. Izumo Shrine's head priest Senge Takatomi (1845-1918) contested Ise Shrine's prominence by advocating that Ōkininushi ought to be included in the nation's pantheon as the lord of the underworld.<sup>20</sup> Naturally, Ise Shrine disagreed with this as it would threaten the primacy of their status as head shrine. Ensuing debates led to fierce split amongst Shintō priests demonstrating the personal connection priests felt with their particular shrines, inhibiting any greater unity. The government finally resolved the issue by restricting what sort of functions certain priests could perform further contributing to the national character of Shintō.

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<sup>17</sup> Pickens, *Essentials of Shintō*, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Hardacre, *Shintō and The State*, 30.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

Regarding the ranking of Imperial and National Shrines, the Department experienced some success since the recognition suggested a higher status to the populace. However, shrines at the Imperial and local level still retained strong ties to lineage priesthoods and local authority.<sup>21</sup> In this regard, the hegemony of a centralized Shintō was not yet realized.

Another avenue through which the Meiji government sought to spread and solidify Shintō was through the enactment of the Great Promulgation Campaign 1870-1884 (J. *taikyō senpu undo*). Though not technically termed Shintō yet, the training for the “National Evangelists” included learning Shintō ideals.<sup>22</sup> During its fourteen-year tenure, the Campaign worked to instill values and ideas encouraged by the state in order to promote unity and civic duty amongst the Japanese populace. The sensibilities to be fostered were: reverence for the gods, patriotism towards Japan, and the complete obedience to the emperor and court. The propagation of these virtues would reveal limits to the Shintō priest’s abilities however, and would have interesting consequences in spreading Shintō’s influence.

When the Meiji government entrusted Shintō priests with the task of spreading state ideology it soon discovered limitations with their ability to do.<sup>23</sup> Shintō priests

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>23</sup> Kim, *Empire of the Dharma*, 52.

simply lacked the experience to effectively spread state ideologies and were furthermore at odds due to infighting.<sup>24</sup> Buddhism, on the other hand, had the whole Edo period to develop close ties to the populace. Moreover, Buddhists sought to again prove their worth to the Meiji regime. With such close traditional ties, Buddhist monks proved to be much more effective in spreading state ideologies.

These efforts would also see the incorporation of new religious movements into the distribution of state ideology and consequently, some identification with Shintō. At the onset of the Meiji era, the emergence of new religious groups was troublesome to both Buddhism, State Shintō, and local government officials. These institutions were wary of these new religious groups who might upset their consolidation of power or steal members. As a result, these new groups could not necessarily operate without harassment from the government or other religious institutions.<sup>25</sup>

To counter this potential persecution, the natural solution for these new religious groups was to attach themselves to the Great Promulgation Campaign. Doing so however, meant that these groups would have to harmonize their own views with those of Shintō.<sup>26</sup> Through these compromises, these groups could not only escape persecution but also seek the government's approval.

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<sup>24</sup> Hardacre, *Shintō and The State*, 44-45 & 48-49.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

Through the Great Promulgation Campaign, the number of people and institutions involved with State Shintō gradually expanded. Not only did the Campaign enable Shintō to play a prominent role in the dissemination of state policy, but the relative inadequacy of Shintō priests in that propagation had several beneficial—if unexpected—consequences. The inefficiency of Shintō priest's ability to give sermons allowed Buddhists to effectively take on this role. This allowed Shintō ideology another avenue of reaching the masses and still retaining its privileged status with the state.

Likewise, the participation of new religious movements in the Great Promulgation Campaign allowed for the generation of sectarian brand of Shintō. Again, this would allow for even greater dissemination of ideology with the added benefit of these groups having closer ties with State Shintō. Furthermore, these developments allowed Shintō to clarify what it was in comparison to sectarian branches and Buddhist institutions. This distinction become even more apparent after debates on the religious status of Shintō.

Early Meiji's lack of religious freedom became a central issue in negotiations with Western powers concerning the renewal of trade treaties. Western nations demanded that Shintō be removed as a state religion and that the ban on Christianity be lifted. As shown above, in 1872 the Department of Divinity was subsumed by the Ministry of Education and a year later the Meiji government lifted its ban on Christianity allowing

Christians to freely proselytize within Japan. Consequently, humanitarian efforts of Christians (constructing hospitals, schools etc.) helped to make converts and popularize the religion.<sup>27</sup> For the Meiji government and State Shintō, this was a problem since it reflected the free movement within Japan of Western influence threatening traditional Japanese customs and identity. This chain of events sparked much debate over whether or not State Shintō was considered a religious entity.

State Shintō priests largely sought to be identified as liturgists whose duty was to perform rituals associated with the state.<sup>28</sup> As shown, adopting a pastoral role was not a strong suite of the Shintō priesthood as evidenced by a remark during the Great Promulgation Campaign stating, “Shintō priests are ritualists—it is absurd to have them teach a creed.”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, priests largely identified religion with Christianity which they despised. This association alone gave another reason to claim non-religious status.<sup>30</sup>

However, even in this regard there were factional disputes amongst priests.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, since priests offered no consensus on the issue, it was terribly difficult for the government to weigh in on it as well. This issue was ultimately addressed with the

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<sup>27</sup> Kim, *Empire of the Dharma*, 58-59.

<sup>28</sup> Hardacre, *Shintō and The State*, 35.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

finalized draft of the Meiji Constitution and the passing of the Imperial Rescript on Education.

Statesmen Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909) and his colleague Inoue Kowashi (1843-1895) presented in 1887 a finalized version of article twenty-eight of the Meiji Constitution stating that, “Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their *duties*, enjoy freedom of religious belief.”<sup>32</sup> This meant that Japanese could worship as they pleased, but only within the limits of what the Meiji government considered acceptable with regards to public order and the duties of the citizen.

This relative ambiguity of “duty” was dismissed after the passing of the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890. The Rescript promoted absolute obedience to and recognition of the emperor’s divine nature. This provided a thorny issue for Christians evangelizing in Japan. How could the idea of God be reconciled with the emperor’s own divinity? Shintō, on the other hand, incorporated the emperor’s divine nature within its very foundation, and as shown, strove to help the government in spreading this ideology.

This incorporation of the emperor’s divinity and the desire to work with the state accomplished two results: first, it created a point to heavily criticize Christianity’s

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 119-120. Emphasis added.

growing presence within Japan, and second, it helped to solidify the position of State Shintō priests with nationalists within the Meiji Government, securing governmental support and aid.<sup>33</sup>

To a great extent, this helped flesh out the distinction of State Shintō and its sectarian counterpart. With the passing of the Rescript in conjunction with the stipulations of Meiji religious freedom, it was clear that Shintō would possess some distinct status amongst religions present in Japan. This close association meant that obedience to the emperor—Shintō's ritual specialty—was now part of the civic duty of *all* Japanese subjects regardless of religious affiliation.

This is particularly evident in the case of the Christian schoolteacher Uchimura Kanzō (1861-1930). During a ceremony in 1891, the principal of a Tokyo preparatory school read aloud from the Imperial Rescript on Education. By virtue of the constitution, this was classified as a patriotic act of duty—not a religious gesture—and thus required. However, during this ceremony, Uchimura refused to bow. The incident soon became national news further stigmatizing Christianity and Christians as unpatriotic and Uchimura was actually removed from his post.<sup>34</sup>

This is clearly indicative of some fundamental disconnect between the importation and implementation of a specifically Western style thought in the religious

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<sup>33</sup> Kim, *Empire of the Dharma* 2012, 60-63.

<sup>34</sup> Hardacre, *Shintō and the State*, 123.

landscape of Meiji Japan.<sup>35</sup> As Japanese influence began to spread across the East Sea, colonial policy would seek to incorporate State Shintō's ideology into assimilation policies on the Korean peninsula.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 121.

### 3. The Rising Sun Over Chosŏn: The Annexation of Korea

In order to stand on par with Western nations, the Meiji government realized that it would have to find a suitable blueprint on which to model the new Japanese state. In order to find a suitable model, the Meiji government assembled a group of some forty-six officials led by the Japanese minister Iwakura Tomomi.<sup>1</sup> This “Iwakura Mission” was founded in 1871 and traveled throughout Western countries before returning to Japan in 1873.<sup>2</sup> During its three year tenure, Japanese students and state officials soaked up Western culture and met with important intellectuals and politicians in order to learn and understand Western methods of governing and thought so that modern ideas could be co-opted into Japanese policies. Due to the lurking fear of further Western advances into Japanese soil, Japanese officials held a particular affection for German geopolitical thought.<sup>3</sup>

Upon receiving members of the Iwakura Mission, the German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck (1815-1898) subtly lauded the importance of expansion for a nation’s wellbeing and protection.<sup>4</sup> Historically, the Tokugawa regime had utilized other ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> Kume Kunitake, *The Iwakura Embassy, 1871-73* vol. 1, *The United States of America*. Trans. Martin Collcutt. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), xv-xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Mark E. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 51.

<sup>3</sup> Michio Umegaki, “National Identity, National Past, National Isms,” in *The Ambivalence of Nationalism Modern Japan Between East and West*, ed. James W. White, Michio Umegaki, and Thomas R.H. Havens (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 259.

<sup>4</sup> Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, 53.

groups outside of its domain of power to secure Japanese interests and avoid foreign intrusion; the Ainu in the north of Japan provided a buffer against potential invaders while the Ryuku Islands served as a middle man for trade with China.<sup>5</sup>

This information found a ready audience in Japanese policy makers, who could now set about officially incorporating these groups into the greater Japanese nation backed by historical and contemporary legitimization. Furthermore, in 1885, another German official—Major Klemens Wilhelm Jakob Meckel—called attention to the possible necessity of action against Japan’s peninsular neighbor by allegedly describing Korea as “a dagger thrust at the heart of Japan.”<sup>6</sup> However it should be noted that Meiji officials had previously grappled with what exactly to do with Korea as early as the early 1870s in what is known as the *seikanron* (literally akin to, “the debate whether or not to punish Korea”). As suggested by the term, this dispute was precisely over whether or not Japan should take some sort of punitive measure toward Korea.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, the question to punish Korea arose from Korean isolationism and a stubborn unwillingness to negotiate trade treaties with Japan.<sup>8</sup> This lurking debate

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 53 & 61.

<sup>6</sup> E. Taylor Atkins, *Primitive Selves: Koreana in the Japanese Imperial Gaze, 1910-1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 19.

<sup>7</sup> Richard W. Anderson, “Jingū Kōgō ‘Ema’ in Southwestern Japan: Reflections and Anticipations of the ‘Seikanron’ Debate in the Late Tokugawa and Early Meiji Period,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 61, no. 2 (2002): 225.

<sup>8</sup> Takii Kazuhiro, *Itō Hirobumi—Japan’s First Prime Minister and Father of the Meiji Constitution*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 37.

coupled with existing Japanese xenophobia and paranoia, and this tacit advice from the West gave Japan a sense of modern legitimacy to cast an imperial gaze toward the Korean peninsula.<sup>9</sup>

While Japan and China scrambled to reform after the fall of the Qing Dynasty during the late nineteenth century, Chosŏn Korea (1392-1910) took a very different path. Priding themselves as preservers of Chinese culture, the Chosŏn court maintained an isolationist policy shutting itself off to the Western “barbarians” and Japanese envoys hoping to establish trade. Further frustrating Japanese envoys and officials was the Chosŏn court’s refusal to acknowledge the Japanese emperor’s authority as a sovereign on par with China or any other modern nation for the matter. In 1869 the Korean official An Tong-jun went so far as to remark that the title “Meiji emperor” made no sense since there was only one emperor and that was the Chinese emperor.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, An made it clear that the Japanese ruler was on the same level of respect as the Korean king regardless of technological or social advancements that Japan was striving for.<sup>11</sup> This clearly indicates the enduring Sino-centric worldview held by Chosŏn officials and would indicate the problems the Japanese would face in subsequent encounters with the peninsula.

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<sup>9</sup> Umegaki, “National Identity, National Past, National Isms,” 252-249.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in The Sun, A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 99.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

However, 1875 witnessed the emergence of Japan's own gunboat policy and an incident off the coast of Korea whereby a Japanese vessel was fired upon by Korean cannons. Taking full advantage of this opportunity, the Japanese sent warships and troops to the peninsula demanding an apology. This Western-style tactic resulted in the opening of Korea in February 1876 with the signing of the Kanghwa treaty.<sup>12</sup> With Korea now open, not only could Japan begin to impose its own unfair treaties, but was also afforded another opportunity to expand its own borders.

Still fearful of foreign intrusion, Japan sought to curry favor with the Chosŏn court to create yet another buffer zone between mainland Japan and the encroaching West. However, the political situation in the Chosŏn court remained complicated due to lingering Chinese support. More alarmingly though, the Korean King Kojong's (1852-1919) wife, Queen Myŏngsŏng (1851-1895), was flirting with both Russia in the North and the Chinese, creating a tense and uncomfortable situation for hopeful Japanese officials seeking to secure Japanese hegemony.<sup>13</sup>

Surprisingly though, Chinese influence was largely eliminated as a result of a purely Korean movement. As Queen Myŏngsŏng continued to consolidate power, the greater Korean populace began to feel the burden of corrupt *yangban* (the landed gentry

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<sup>12</sup> W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 44-45.

<sup>13</sup> Atkins, *Primitive Seloes*, 20.

of Chosŏn Korea) as they imposed new taxes and stipulations on farmers.<sup>14</sup> As dissent began to spread amongst the peasantry, the grass-roots religious movement Donghak (literally, “Eastern Learning”) gained momentum solidifying the peasant population and culminating with a widespread peasant rebellion (1893-1894).

Briefly characterized, Donghak was a synthesis of Confucianism and folk religion arranged in a monotheistic framework.<sup>15</sup> The rebellion was aimed at overthrowing Myŏngsŏng’s power and replacing the oppressive *yangban* rule with new Confucian inspired policies aimed at helping lower class members of Korean society.<sup>16</sup> As the rebellion approached Chŏnju, Korean officials panicked and appealed to Qing China for help. Due to obligations based on treaty agreements however, the Chosŏn government was required to also inform Japan of the incoming Chinese soldiers.<sup>17</sup>

This meeting of Qing and Japanese troops in 1894 ended the rebellion but tensions boiled over into a conflict between Japan and China. While this engagement was brief, ending in 1895, it held great significance for Japan. Victory over China not only granted Japan a patriotic boon and international recognition, but also significant

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<sup>14</sup> Carter J. Eckert et. al. *Korea Old and New: A History* (Cambridge: Ilchokak, 1990), 215.

<sup>15</sup> Don Baker, *Korean Spirituality* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 79-81.

<sup>16</sup> Eckert et. al. *Korea Old and New*, 218.

<sup>17</sup> Cummings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 119.

territorial gains. These included Taiwan, the Pescadore Islands, and the Liaotung peninsula as dictated by the war reparations.<sup>18</sup>

However, this territorial gain proved to be bitter sweet since an international “Tripartite Intervention” consisting of Germany, Russian, and France forced Japan to give up Liaotung and with it, Port Arthur in exchange for a larger indemnity.<sup>19</sup> This resulted in negotiations between Tokyo and Moscow regarding Korean territory but to no avail. In 1904, the Japanese stormed Port Arthur and by 1905 Russia pressed for peace.<sup>20</sup> This victory again gained Japan international attention and a patriotic boon. Moreover, this effectively meant that the Korean peninsula could now be influenced without contestation from foreign colonial powers.

Japan’s foray into Korea was by no means an instantaneous occurrence. Spurred on by the threat of foreign intrusion, Japan slowly consolidated power over the course of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By gradually expanding its borders, Japan sought to create zones of control in East Asia that could stymie the advance of the colonial West and foster the creation of a unique Japanese polity. To further spread this Japanese influence, the Meiji government sent political strong man Itō Hirobumi to the Korean peninsula.

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<sup>18</sup> Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, 70.

<sup>19</sup> Cummings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 119.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

#### 4. Civilizing the Peninsula: The Drive to Assimilate Koreans

Itō's strong-arm politics forced the Korean Cabinet to accept the Protectorate Treaty in 1905. With the treaty came the creation of the position Resident General of Korea which, although technically under King Kojong, wielded formidable power over Korean affairs.<sup>1</sup> The Resident General had control over Korea's foreign affairs and, in 1907, imported a Japanese-style bureaucracy that gained power over Korea's internal affairs, and then even dismissed Korea's standing army.<sup>2</sup> The justification for such drastic control came from Itō's desire to create a "civilized" and modern country as Japan had become.

Of Koreans, Itō stated that,

They are in no way less competent than we are. They are not to blame for the circumstances they are in today. It's their government's fault. If only their country is governed well, then the people will not lack, qualitatively or quantitatively.<sup>3</sup>

The platform he had in mind was that of re-education and a gradual reconstruction of Korean society. As such, he tried to play the middle ground between a rapid ousting of traditional culture and a stubborn clinging to those same customs.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eckert, et. al. *Korea Old and New*, 239.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>3</sup> Takii, *Itō Hirobumi*, 190.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 192-197.

More surprisingly, it seems that even with the looming annexation, Itō conceived of a Korea that was actually run by a Korean parliament, allowing for a colonial self-rule.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding Korean development, Itō saw himself as a “missionary of civilization.”<sup>6</sup> While he did seem to respect Koreans, this “missionary” relationship sets up the notion of a people who are still ignorant of modern knowledge and lacking in some way. Furthermore, his ultimate goal was the eventual assimilation of the Korean subaltern, even if it was a gentler gradual process.

For example, concerning the wearing of *sangtu* (the traditional hairstyle of Korean nobility and scholars), Itō held that as the Koreans became more and more Japanese (“civilized”), this practice would essentially go away by itself.<sup>7</sup> Rather, traditional aspects of perceived Korean backwardness would simply fade away and be replaced by Japanese customs. Even Itō’s idea of a Korea under self-colonial rule was still modeled on a Japanese version. Despite his more tempered approach, Itō’s goal was still the transformation of Koreans into Japanese subjects.

While Itō paved the way for a greater Japanese presence in Korea, he himself would never see the annexation or passing of major assimilation policy. On October 26, 1909, in Harbin, Manchuria, Itō was killed by the Korean national Ahn Jung-gūn (1879-

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 197.

1909).<sup>8</sup> With or without Itō however, Japan's complete colonization of Korea began in 1910 with the annexation of the peninsula and Terauchi Masatake, assuming the newly created position of Governor General of Korea (GGK henceforth), vested with near absolute power.<sup>9</sup>

The rapid expansion of the GGK's bureaucracy allowed for a wide penetration into the Korean peninsula. At its conception, in 1910, the bureaucracy had approximately 10,000 administrators and by 1937 had roughly 87,552 (about half of which were Koreans) spread across the peninsula.<sup>10</sup> In addition to a fleet of bureaucrats, the GGK also controlled the colonial police force (which by 1943 had accumulated approximately 22,715 policemen with roughly one third of them being Koreans) and held control over judicial decisions, financial matters, and had final say in all appointments within the bureaucracy.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, despite structural re-organization aimed at weakening its power in 1919 and again in 1942, the GGK still held his authority over the peninsula.<sup>12</sup> With such extensive administrative power and reach, the GGK had many avenues in which it could enact its assimilation policies upon Koreans.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>9</sup> Eckert, et. al. *Korea Old and New*, 241.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>11</sup> Brandon Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy: Koreans in Japan's war, 1937-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 19; Eckert, et al. *Korea Old and New*, 257.

<sup>12</sup> Eckert, et al., *Korea Old and New*, 257.

Assimilation policies were based largely on Japanese perceptions of their newly acquired subjects. Broadly speaking, despite the thoughts of Japanese thinkers such as Itō, the Japanese attitude towards their newly acquired colonial subjects was not terrifically positive. Colonial officials judged Korean society through a lens of societal discrimination with a westernized and modern Meiji Japan as the point of reference. The wide consensus amongst officials then was that they were dealing with a culturally backward and juvenile people.<sup>13</sup>

A poignant example of this comes from Japanese reporter Shunjō Shakuo who stated in 1910, "...just like the Chinks, they have very poor personal hygiene, or should I say no personal hygiene at all." and furthermore, "...the central government should quit trying to identify Koreans through their faces and start paying attention first to their butts. Maybe then we could have some decent political rule in Korea."<sup>14</sup> This sort of thinking also preoccupied the thoughts of some Korean's such as Kang Chŏn, who wrote of fellow Koreans in 1908, "They are so weak that it seems as if they will be carried away by the wind, just like red autumn leaves. This is not the result of natural or physiological reasons, but of humanly conceived habits and customs."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lee Sung-Yup, "Changing Faces" in *Critical Reading on the Colonial Period of Korea 1910-1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 123.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 124.

The above thinkers show that the perceived problem of the Korean subaltern was not a matter of genetics or race but a problem of culture. Even though Shunjō was writing from the perspective of the colonizer seeking to dominate the colonized, Kang, on the other hand, is concerned about finding a new source of revitalization for the nation; the problem of culture and custom is the focus for both thinkers.

A culture that, from the standpoint of the Japanese, would have to be re-cast into an acceptable Japanese style mold so far as cultural divisions would permit. However, what would prove to be the best avenue for this reconstruction and assimilation of Korea into Japan?

Concerning the advancement of the Korean subjects, Japanese minister Hayashi Tadasu (1815-1913) stated in 1910 that Koreans must adopt “Japanese spirit and thought.”<sup>16</sup> To account for this, through 1910-1919 the GGK worked to create an education system that was aimed at cultivation of “Japanese qualities” within Korean students. In 1911, the The Educational Ordinance for Chōsen stated, “Common education shall pay special attention to the engendering of national [Japanese] characteristics and the spread of the national language; the essential principles of education in Korea shall be the making of loyal and good subjects by giving instruction

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<sup>16</sup> Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policy in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, 83.

on the basis of the Imperial Rescript concerning education.”<sup>17</sup> The Imperial Rescript, as shown previously, demanded the total obedience of imperial subject’s—Japanese or otherwise—complete devotion to the emperor of Japan. With such stipulations on education, the colonial government could not only propagate itself across the peninsula, but also attempted to craft loyal imperial subjects. Interestingly, however, not all Japanese seemed to agree with such an agenda of educational assimilation.

The Japanese historian Shiratori Kurakichi (1865-1942) challenged the student-teacher model of assimilation and instead advocated a process of “caressing enticement” implying that Japanese would have to take on a fatherly attitude and gently groom their new colonial subjects.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the journalist Takekoshi Yosaburō (1865-1950) felt that Koreans needed to only be educated enough to fit within the confines of labor. Most notably, Takekoshi claimed that if Koreans were to even learn Japanese this would lead them to greater knowledge and eventually cause them to revolt against the colonial government.<sup>19</sup> The thrust of the assimilation effort however, went on despite these critiques. In order to truly dispel the perceived shroud of backwardness, the Japanese had to instill “spirit” into their colonial subjects. Military propaganda aimed at Koreans serves as a poignant example.

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<sup>17</sup> Eckert, et. al., *Korea Old and New*, 262.

<sup>18</sup> Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policy in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, 84.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

With the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese war in 1937, a Korean publication proclaimed, “The China Incident was the storm that breathed new life into Korea that had broken out its old shell. This storm stirred awake the Japanese consciousness that had been sleeping deep within the hearts of our Korean brethren” and later, “An ardent emotion arose like a surging tide: Insofar as we are Japanese, we hope to serve as humble shields [for the nation] as members of the glorious Imperial forces.”<sup>20</sup> Whether the authors truly believed this sentiment or not, it shows an emphasis by the Japanese on an awakening sense of patriotic spirit and furthermore shows the accelerated push towards assimilation spurred on by the onset of war. To help spread this sense of transformative patriotism Japanese wartime media certainly played its part.

The Japanese war media frequently showed photographs of Korean men dressed as imperial soldiers next to family members still wearing white *hanbok*, the traditional Korean clothing. Such juxtaposition suggests an idea that military service was an avenue for the Korean male to emerge as a member of a new and modern society.<sup>21</sup> Movies were also utilized to help portray this concept. The 1941 film *Volunteer Soldier* gives the narrative of the Korean peasant Chun-ho. In the film, Chun-ho has inherited his father’s position as the manager of a landlord’s farm. However, the landlord pegs Chun-ho as an incompetent country bumpkin and gives the position to Chun-ho’s rival. After learning

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<sup>20</sup> Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy*, 54.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

about the volunteer soldier system, Chun-ho enlists and is admitted into the Japanese army. After hearing about his enlistment, the landlord realizes that Chun-ho is not a backward peasant but a competent man worthy of service in the imperial army and the landlord promises to support Chun-ho's sister and mother until Chun-ho returns from the army. Chun-ho's narrative shows how Japanese institutions could help Koreans transcend economic hardship and low social status to become socially worthy, modern, and competent citizens.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to media portrayal, Japanese official appealed to more militant aspects of the Korean past such as the *hwarang* (elite bands of warrior youths) of Silla Dynasty and, ironically, the role of Yi Sun-Sin during Hideyoshi's 16<sup>th</sup> century invasion of Korea.<sup>23</sup> Through such invocations of the past, the Japanese sought to portray military service as a means to transcend the backwards, spiritless, and effeminate perception of Koreans by Japanese and to bring them into a Japanese modernity.<sup>24</sup>

This emphasis on military spirit would find cumulative expression through Shintō shrines, particularly during the "Great Keijō Exposition" in 1940. During this celebration of *naisen ittai* (literally "uniting Japan and Korea as one body") the colonial government actually attempted — albeit unsuccessfully — to transform the last capital of

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>23</sup> Eckert, et. al., *Korea Old and New*, 34-35 & 55.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 55.

the ancient Korean kingdom of Paekche, Puyŏ into a Shintō “city” by enshrining four ancient Japanese rulers into the city shrine.<sup>25</sup> During this time as well, the colonial government had a torch lit from the fires burning at Ise Shrine tour the colony before being symbolically lit at Chōsen Shrine.<sup>26</sup>

The Japanese perception of Koreans was very much that of the “primitive self.”<sup>27</sup> Korea became a showpiece of what Japan *used* to be prior to the restoration and Japanese understandings of Korea became painted in tones of temporal discrimination.<sup>28</sup> At every turn, assimilation policy sought to close this temporal distance between Korea and Japan in order to incorporate Koreans into the national polity (J. *kokutai*). And since Japan had broken its own medieval chains of the Edo period, there was still hope for Korea as well.

However, the colonial project was not without its own limitations. Koreans were co-opted into a foreign state and used as means to ensure that state’s protection over its own.<sup>29</sup> Despite Korean endeavor and suffering, and despite the assimilation policies themselves, the specter of the Korean “other” still loomed. For example, when seeing a Korean waitress wearing a *kimono* (traditional Japanese clothing) in colonial Seoul, a Japanese patron yelled, “You may be wearing a Japanese *kimono*, but you just look

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<sup>25</sup> Todd, *Assimilating Seoul*, 173.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-178.

<sup>27</sup> Atkins, *Primitive Selves*, 57.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>29</sup> Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy*, 193-194.

ridiculous. Even wearing a *kimono* you are nothing but a *yobo* [derogatory term for Koreans]."<sup>30</sup> This is interesting since this outrage can be seen beyond the confines of a simple mistake. In the context of Shintō being Japanese indicated a certain spiritual breach in addition to the petty dispute over ethnic clothing. This indicates that the proper protocol for "truly" being assimilated was much more tangled web than merely wearing *kimono*. Even despite Korean attempts to fit in, Koreans still remained at a distance.

Above, I have attempted to generally characterize the project of assimilation undertaken by Japanese colonial officials. At surface level many seem to have quite a secular veneer. However, due to the murky status of State Shintō entailed by the Meiji constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education, the implicit notion underlying these policies was of course the Shintō ideology of the state. The focus on education, civic duty, and military service were all evocative of the goals of the Great Promulgation Campaign and the aims of shrines on the peninsula. In fact, one wartime slogan even stated, "a military man without a spirit is the same as being a human without a soul."<sup>31</sup> Civil service was not just aimed at mobilizing colonial manpower but also carried a spiritual weight.

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<sup>30</sup> Lee, "Changing Faces," 130.

<sup>31</sup> Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy*, 101.

Furthermore, as on mainland Japan, the Imperial Rescript on Education saw the blurring of civic and religious obligation adding another avenue of assimilation for Koreans. This would mean that civic assimilation was part of the causeway by which the spiritual assimilation of Koreans could take place. This would culminate with the push for mandatory Shintō shrine worship at the onset of Japan's pacific war (1936-1945).<sup>32</sup>

This mandate naturally became a thorny problem for Korean Christians but as will be demonstrated below, Koreans would also appeal to native religious tradition to contest this as well.

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<sup>32</sup> Kim Yang-sŏn, "Compulsory Shintō Shrine Worship and Persecution" in *Korea and Christianity*, ed. Chai-Shin Yu (Fremont: Asian Humanities, Press 2004), 87.

## 5. Amaterasu Crosses the Sea: The Spread of Shintō in Colonial Korea

Much like Japan's territorial expansion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the spread of Shintō was a gradual one. Furthermore, the implementation and propagation of Shintō was typically rooted in the desire to demarcate Japanese territory and ensure the central government's hegemony over newly acquired territories.

As a result of Japan's gunboat policy towards Korea, Japanese settlers began to arrive in Korea as early as the 1880s. These early pioneers were by no means uniform in character. Representing a broad cross section of Japanese society, these settlers comprised of poor Japanese displaced by Meiji policy, opportunist merchants, and even former samurai and prostitute camp followers.<sup>1</sup>

As the Meiji government continued to consolidate its influence in Korea, these settler groups only continued to expand. Self-conscious of the growing Japanese populace, Meiji officials imposed rules on Japanese merchants and settlers to behave in a manner befitting a civilized nation (dressing in Western style clothing, discouraging public nudity etc.) even going as far as providing halls for showing off Japanese goods and helping families settle.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Uchida Jun, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 35-39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-41.

Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 witnessed a surge of migration onto the peninsula that coincided with the expansion of Korean railways, further facilitating the ease at which Japanese settlers could penetrate the peninsula.<sup>3</sup> This mass migration allowed settler communities to further ingrain themselves to larger Korean cities and by the time of annexation in 1910 there were approximately 38,400 Japanese in Seoul alone and by December 1910 some 171,543 Japanese on the peninsula as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

The commercial nature of government support meant that prior to 1911, religious representatives were somewhat lacking in early settlements.<sup>5</sup> However, it should be noted that Japanese religious authorities were on the peninsula. As early as 1877 Buddhist sects were participating in oversea missions at the behest of the Meiji government. These missions were aimed at spreading Japanese culture and influence and providing for early emigrants.<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, Shintō priests were active during this time. Two Shintō shrines were established in Wŏnsan and Inchŏn in 1882 and 1890 respectively.<sup>7</sup> In 1894, the Shintō missionary Konishi Senkishi was apparently attacked by Koreans implying some

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 65; Y. Takenob and K. Kawakami, *The Japan Year Book 1913* (London: The Japan Year Book Press, 1913), 658.

<sup>5</sup> Jun, *Brokers of Empire*, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Kim, *Empire of the Dharma*, 76-77.

<sup>7</sup> Nakajima Michio, "Shintō Deities that Crossed the Sea: Japan's 'Oversea Shrines,' 1868-1945," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37, no. 1(2010): 32.

missionary activity by Shintō sects.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, after the Sino-Japanese War, members of the Jingūkyō sect of Shintō were competing with both Buddhist and Christian missionaries for influence on the peninsula.<sup>9</sup> However, the participation of Shintō priests in overseas endeavors during this early period also raises some questions regarding how involved they actually were.

In 1907 there were only ten Shintō priests on the peninsula (compared to 86 Buddhist monks) amongst a Japanese populace numbering roughly 81,657.<sup>10</sup> Such comparatively few priests hardly suggest any great missionary activity. Furthermore, *Japanese Yearbooks* from 1905-1913 do not explicitly mention any missionary efforts on the peninsula. The 1911 volume recounts the implementation of the Imperial Rescript which, as shown previously, carried elements of State Shintō but again, does not explicitly mention active missionary work.<sup>11</sup>

Given the above information, it would seem that during Japan's early probing into Korea the early spread of Shintō was largely due to settlers and their communities. Once established, settler communities enjoyed a relatively high degree of autonomy in their affairs. This crystallized in 1905 with the establishment of residents' assemblies (*J. kyoryūmindan*). Even though these assemblies were technically under the auspices of the

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<sup>8</sup> Hardacre, *Shintō and The State*, 96.

<sup>9</sup> Suga, "A Concept of 'Oversea Shinto Shrines,'" 52.

<sup>10</sup> Y. Takenob and G. Takeda, *The Japan Year Book 1907* (London: The Japan Yearbook Press, 1907), 601.

<sup>11</sup> Y. Takeno, K. Kawakami, *The Japan Year Book 1911* (London: The Japan Yearbook Press, 1911), 677.

Resident-General, they enjoyed a set of privileges including the right to formally finance and construct Shintō shrines.<sup>12</sup> In fact, settlers continued to fund shrine construction until 1915 whereby shrines came under the official domain of colonial authorities.<sup>13</sup>

This enthusiastic construction was very much affected by the desire to spiritually reconnect with the Japanese homeland. Through the construction of shrines settlers could maintain their relationship with the imperial polity thereby helping to cultivate feelings of unity amongst the extreme diversity of Japanese spanning the peninsula and effectively maintaining their national and cultural identity even while overseas.<sup>14</sup>

After the establishment of a colonial government in Korea however, the nature of shrines and settler's influence on the spread of Shintō would change. In 1911 and 1915 the colonial government passed the "Temple Law" and "Regulations Concerning Religious Missions", respectively.<sup>15</sup> These acts essentially gave control of the religious affairs of Korea into the hands of the GGK. Also, attached to the 1915 "Regulations" was the "Regulations Concerning Shrines and Temples." These ordinances acted as the legal

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<sup>12</sup> Jun, *Brokers of Empire*, 69.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>15</sup> Nakajima, "Shintō Deities that Crossed the Sea," 32.

scaffolding for shrines in Korea and would grant shrines previously constructed by settlers official recognition.<sup>16</sup>

This resulted in the significant growth of state authorized shrines on the peninsula. For example, from 1911-1915 there were no such shrines but from 1916-1920 thirty-five had appeared.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, a 1917 ordinance entitled “Ordinance on Semi-Shrines (J. *shinshi*)” allowed the GGK to authorize and control the numerous semi-shrines dotting the peninsula helping to spread colonial influence.<sup>18</sup> In conjunction with the 1910 Imperial Rescript on Education, this allowed for the creation of a network of shrines throughout the peninsula that could act as mouthpieces for the propagation of assimilation policies.

By constructing officially sanctioned Shintō shrines the government would not just appease settler’s fondness and desire for Shintō shrines but also employ them as an opportunity to invite Koreans into the Japanese fold.<sup>19</sup> This type of control wielded by the GGK caused problems between the more religious aspects of these shrines and the interests of the colonial government. Celebrations surrounding the Keijō Shrine provides a good example of this.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>19</sup> Hardacre, *Shintō and The State*, 95; Jun, *Brokers of Empire*, 83.

Keijō Shrine was constructed in 1898 at the behest of settler communities residing in Seoul. The shrine's administration was largely handled by settlers up until the urban restructuring of Seoul in 1916.<sup>20</sup> This urban reform saw to it that the shrine's area of influence went beyond Japanese enclaves and penetrated Korean communities in Seoul. Despite this reform however, Japanese shrine administrators and parishioners seemed unwilling to fully incorporate Koreans into shrine ceremonies. Not only did this frustrate the aims of colonial officials but also complicate the Korean conceptions of what Shintō actually was. For example, the Korean Christian Yun Ch'i-ho (1864-1945) remarked, "Shintōism is so intensely Japanese that it can have no possible meaning outside of Japan. To force Koreans to pay for the support of a religion which they could have no earthly interest can't be said to be freedom of conscience."<sup>21</sup> While biased on Christian grounds, the ceremonies revolving around the Keijō Shrine serves as a testament to Yun's remark.

The largest celebration held through the Keijō Shrine coincided with Ise Shrine celebrations back on the Japanese mainland. The ceremony was characterized by what Henry dubs, "an uneasy coupling of 'pray' then 'play.'"<sup>22</sup> With the initial ceremony comprising ceremonial bowing to Amaterasu followed by a more or less raucous display

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<sup>20</sup> Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 65-66.

<sup>21</sup> Yun Ch'i-Ho, "Diary of Yun Ch'i-Ho 7"

<http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?itemId=sa&setId=10345&position=3> December 17, 1919.

<sup>22</sup> Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 66.

of 'play' including sumo wrestling, fireworks, and the presence of *geisha* (female entertainer and courtesan).<sup>23</sup>

Such energetic displays proved to be less than encouraging to Koreans and colonial officials alike for a number of reasons. First, such displays did not conform to the ideal "Japanese Spirit" that officials sought to instill in their Korean subjects. Likewise, Shrine processions were ambivalent to crossing urban lines in any great capacity during procession, limiting any meaningful penetration into Korean communities. This relative lack of subaltern contact and the emphasis on playful aspects of Shrine worship effectively created some disconnect between overarching colonial aspirations of using shrine worship as a political tool and the actual processions on the ground level.<sup>24</sup> For example, during a 1919 festival, the procession only briefly entered Seoul's northern village (primarily inhabited by Koreans) before retreating to back to the southern section of the city where mostly Japanese residents and businesses were located.<sup>25</sup>

The character of these processions also convoluted the Korean conceptualization of Amaterasu and reinforced the one sided idea of Japanese supremacy on the peninsula. In addition to conflicting with ideas of what "proper" Japanese ritual ought

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 67-70.

<sup>24</sup> Nakajima, "Shintō Deities that Crossed the Sea," 32.

<sup>25</sup> Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 70-71.

to be, the carnival-like displays made it difficult for Koreans to grasp any deeper ritual understanding of shrine processions.<sup>26</sup> In an effort to draw a larger Korean crowd, shrine processions did witness the appearance of Korean *kisaeng* (the Korean equivalent to *geisha*) but these women were portrayed in such a fashion that placed them lower than their Japanese counterparts.

While Japanese *geisha* wore the exotic flowing robes of Heian Japan (795-1185) and rode on a parade float, Korean *kisaeng* walked during the procession clothed in the day to day clothing of Chosŏn Korea.<sup>27</sup> While *kisaeng* were the only wholly Korean group to be represented prior to 1925, they were still represented in a lesser capacity that maintained the idea of Koreans as being subservient to the Japanese. Furthermore, while the addition of *kisaeng* did draw more numbers, this is likely due to the opportunity to see courtesans and sex workers as opposed to any greater religious understanding.<sup>28</sup>

To counter the spotty attempts by Keijō Shrine to conform to hope of the colonial government and in an attempt to pacify nationalist Koreans after the 1919 independence movements, construction on the Chōsen Shrine began in 1920. Upon its completion in 1925, Chōsen Shrine was granted the status of Imperial Shrine (J. *Chōsen Jingu*)

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<sup>26</sup> Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 74.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 68 & 73.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

supplanting the prominence of the Keijō Shrine and receiving state sponsored support and donations.<sup>29</sup>

Keijō Shrine administrators feared that the new shrine might result in a loss of parishioners (and thus funding), its unique place in Seoul, and further feared that their own shrine might be subsumed under the Chōsen Shrine.<sup>30</sup>

Instead, both shrines remained autonomous and cooperated with one another in order to coordinate festival activities. Despite these negotiations however, Keijō administrators sought to criticize Chōsen Shrine on religious grounds while still attempting to carve a niche out for itself.

Upon Chōsen Shrine's completion in 1925, colonial officials dissuaded shrine priests from performing various religious ceremonies instead emphasizing a duty to perform civic ceremony in its absence. In response to this, Keijō Shrine priests continued to perform various religious ceremonies taking away potential parishioners from the new Shrine despite accolades from their rival priests.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, in an attempt to further differentiate Keijō Shrine from Chōsen Shrine, Keijō administrators even went as far as to "Koreanize" certain *kami*. In 1929 the *kami* Kunitama-no-Ōkami with the prefix "Chōsen" attached to it was enshrined in an

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<sup>29</sup> Nakajima, "Shintō Deities that Crossed the Sea," 32.

<sup>30</sup> Henry, *Assimiliating Seoul*, 82.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

attempt to appeal to potential Korean parishioners.<sup>32</sup> However, priests were careful to maintain that this *kami* was still subservient to Amaterasu.

While Keijō Shrine sought to further appeal to Koreans, Chōsen Shrine sought to pick up where Keijō Shrine had failed in its assimilation of Koreans. Given the national character of Chōsen Shrine, its civic ceremonies were charged with the vague supra-religious character of State Shintō discussed earlier. Nevertheless, despite this civil character ceremonies were still mired by prior Korean interactions with Keijō Shrine's rambunctious ceremonies.

For example, after Shrine ceremonies in the fall of 1929, Koreans were reproved for bringing *kisaeng* and other romantic interests to the Shrine on picnics and other more discreet business.<sup>33</sup> This seems to suggest that Koreans remained largely ill-informed of Shintō even during more austere civil rituals. In this regard however, it should be pointed out that despite the chagrin of some Japanese officials, the Japanese had not always traditionally held such an austere attitude toward worship either.

For example, the general term for the "play" and "pray" attitude in late Edo was *kaichō*. Literally meaning "to open a curtain," it was typically used as a colloquialism for gambling or sexual gratification.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the religious ceremony was typically

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<sup>32</sup> Suga, "A Concept of 'Overseas Shintō Shrines,'" 57.

<sup>33</sup> Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 85.

<sup>34</sup> Nam-Lin Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 217.

synonymous with rather colorful events and activities such as booths selling sweets and toys, kabuki plays, archery ranges, and other pleasurable activities.<sup>35</sup> These *kaichō* events even displayed a sort of “freak show” to display oddities or novelty crafts. As late as the 1862 celebration, this took the form of a display of model wombs and exposed fetuses.<sup>36</sup>

Regarding this sort of activity however, it should be noted that this energetic fusion of play and prayer was not irreverent or “wrong.” These practices were merely the result of practices that developed during the Edo period whereby the boundaries between the religious and the worldly became blurred.<sup>37</sup> It is also worth noting that Korean religious celebrations could take on a more festive veneer as well.

For example, during the Koryō Dynasty (918-1392) celebrations of the Buddha’s birth were state-sponsored festivals aimed at protecting the nation and the king’s health but, by the time of the Chosŏn Dynasty, the celebration had lost much of the Buddhist connotation essentially becoming a children’s day festival.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, traditional Korean shamanic ritual also includes the usage of alcohol and the incorporation of music and dance giving it a festive character.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>38</sup> Hwansoo Kim, “A Buddhist Christmas: The Buddha’s Birthday Festival in Colonial Korea (1928-1945,” *Journal of Korean Religions* 2, no. 2 (October 2011): 60.

<sup>39</sup> Hyun-Key Kim Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism* (Seoul: Jimoondang Publishing, 1999), 151 & 164.

Additionally, during the 1930's the Chōsen Shrine remained a popular tourist attraction. For the equivalent of eight cents, Japanese expatriates and visitors could enjoy a leisurely bus tour of Seoul. On some of these tours the first stop was actually the Chōsen Shrine and the lush Nanzan Park surrounding it.<sup>40</sup> This demonstrates that even the Japanese could be capable of treating the shrine as a location for enjoyment.

Similarly, Koreans often visited the shrines with self-interest rather than devotion in mind. For example, for a housewife from Kyōng-gi province, the most important thing to be gained from a Shintō ceremony was to “just get the food ration card!”<sup>41</sup> This anecdote suggests that this particular woman was only interested in conforming as a means of helping her own family—accolades to the emperor were likely not important.

Korean misunderstanding was not the only obstacle for civic ritual either. Many Japanese reacted disparagingly towards Koreans who actually came to the shrine for civic ritual. Describing them as “on-looking” instead of “worshipping” one Japanese citizen stated, “How can Koreans have a sense of faith when [these] *yobo* have only come to look around?”<sup>42</sup> In addition to suggesting another reason for Korean reluctance, this

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<sup>40</sup> Kenneth J. Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at its Zenith: The Wartime Celebration of the Empire's 2600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 116-117.

<sup>41</sup> Hildi Kang, *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices From Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 113.

<sup>42</sup> Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 84-85.

demonstrates that even despite the colonial government's desire to assimilate Koreans, Shintō could still fail to conform to that very same colonial policy.

The spread of Shintō on the Korean peninsula was by no means an overnight affair. Despite, official goals of assimilation, the above information suggests that Japanese settlers played a significant part in its propagation even if the goals of those involved did not always align. Settlers sought to utilize Shintō as a means to distinguish themselves as Japanese by maintaining a spiritual tie to mainland Japan. For these settlers, this tie granted them a superior place on the peninsula compared to their Korean subjects.

It seems that this haughty attitude would mark the spread of Shintō throughout the peninsula. Even the controversy surrounding Keijō and Chōsen Shrines centered on the settler's fear of losing some privileged status to the newly established Chōsen Shrine. Furthermore, the spread of Shintō did not always appear to fully embrace assimilation policy, resulting in the exclusion of Koreans from ceremonies meant to harmonize the two peoples into a greater *kokutai*.

Furthermore, the spread of Shintō on the peninsula was contested by Korean Christians. Some Korean Christians saw this promotion as an affront to their faith and

would clash with authorities over the matter.<sup>43</sup> However, another avenue of Korean protest over the implementation of Shintō can also be seen with regards to the mythology surrounding the Korean progenitor god, Tan'gun.

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<sup>43</sup> Kim, "Compulsory Shintō Shrine Worship and Persecution," 88.

## 6. Reclaiming Ko-Chosŏn: Korean Development of Tan'gun Mythology

The Korean myth of Tan'gun gives an account for the creation of Korea's earliest state known as Ko-Chosŏn or Wanggŏm Chosŏn. The actual existence of this state is, of course suspect, yet the mythic roots grant Korea a special origin. The myth was originally drawn from a document entitled *Tan'gun Kogi*. This document however, no longer exists and the oldest surviving iterations of the tale are four in number comprising of two works from the 13<sup>th</sup> century—*Samguk Yusa* and *Chewang Un'gi*—and two from the fifteenth century, the *Ŭngje-Si* and *Sejong Sillok*.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest of these was the *Samguk Yusa* compiled by the Korean monk Iryŏn (1206-1289) and would serve as the basis for subsequent documented iterations of the myth. Iryŏn's work was in some degree a response to the Confucian scholar Kim Pusik's (1075-1151) *Samguk Sagi*. Kim's account of Korean history employed a more traditional Confucian method of documentation and ignored much of the folklore and myth present in Iryŏn's account.<sup>2</sup>

Briefly characterized Iryŏn's version of the myth is as follows: The god Hwanin had a son called Hwanung, who desired to go to earth and establish a kingdom. Taking three royal regalia (the actual description of these items is lost today) with him to earth,

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<sup>1</sup> James H. Grayson, *Myths and Legends from Korea* (Cornwall: Curzon Press, 2001), 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

Hwanung created a heavenly city inhabited by spirits.<sup>3</sup> On earth, Hwanung oversaw the propagation of all “three hundred and sixty kinds of work for mankind.”<sup>4</sup> At some point a tiger and bear came to Hwanung since they wished to become humans. Hwanung gave them twenty cloves of garlic and sacred mugwort and commanded that if they stayed in a cave for one hundred days and ate only the mugwort and garlic they would become human. The tiger was unable to follow these instruction and left while the bear completed the command and becomes the woman Ungnyŏ. Ungnyŏ later desired a child so Hwanung took human form and the result of their union was the birth of Tan’gun. Tan’gun established a city at Pyŏngyang and ruled for 1,500 years before Kija arrived and assumed charge of the city. Afterwards, Tan’gun became “the” Mountain God at 1,908 years of age.

It is possible that the original tale of Tan’gun was perhaps based off of an earlier existing Chinese legend that has since been lost.<sup>5</sup> The Wu Liang Tz’u—a collection of stone slabs dating to the Han Dynasty—depict scenes that are strikingly similar to certain aspects of the Korean myth and the inclusion of garlic, mugwort, and a celestial bureaucracy suggest Taoist influence.<sup>6</sup> Given the roughly one thousand year difference

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>5</sup> Chewon Kim, “Han Dyansty Mythology and the Korean Legend of Tan’Gun.” In *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* v.3 (1948/1949): 43.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 47.

between the emergence of Iryŏn's work and the existence of the Han artifacts it is not unreasonable that Korean's tailored the story from the possible Chinese original.<sup>7</sup> Even though this potential Chinese origin can certainly be debated, the traditional usage of the Tan'gun myth was generally concerned with maintaining and legitimizing ties with Chinese culture.

When Iryŏn wrote his version of the tale in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Korea was threatened by the Mongol Empire (1234-1367).<sup>8</sup> With this in mind, we can see Iryŏn's telling of the myth as a sort of what John Jorgensen terms a "proto-nationalism."<sup>9</sup> Part of the treaty stipulations brokered by the Mongols was that Korean kings were expected to marry Mongol princesses.<sup>10</sup> This diminished the amount of Korean blood flowing through Korean kings, threatening Korean identity.

In this regards, the Tan'gun myth can be seen as preserving Korean identity. Not only does Tan'gun establish a uniquely Korean domain but his ancient character establishes that Korea—like China—has an ancient civilization with a divine origin.<sup>11</sup> Despite Mongol aggression, this gives Korea a cultural high ground compared to the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>8</sup> Eckert, et. al. *Korea Old and New*, 91-93.

<sup>9</sup> John Jorgensen, "Korea as a Source for the Regeneration of Chinese Buddhism: The Evidence of Ch'an and Sŏn." In *Currents and Countercurrents*, ed. Robert Buswell Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 76.

<sup>10</sup> Eckert, et. al. *Korea Old and New*, 95.

<sup>11</sup> Grayson, *Myths and Legends From Korea*, 54.

Mongol threat granting a unique position. However, Iryŏn's seemingly exclusive focus on Korea seems off put by the mention of Kija.

The myth states that after Tan'gun's rule of some 1,500 years was succeeded by the character Kija. This figure is supposedly the uncle of the final ruler of the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BCE) and left for Korea, "As the Shang Dynasty was in decline."<sup>12</sup> For later Neo-Confucian scholars, the addition of Kija—a distinctly Chinese participant—in the myth, helped to legitimize Korea's status as being on par with China. Rulers of Chosŏn could revel in this connection. Kija was associated with education and learning and, as a co-progenitor of Korea, this link to a Chinese "sage" bolstered the nature of Korean kings and brought Korea closer within the borders of a cultured China.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, it seems that during this time Tan'gun fell by the wayside as Kija's importance was magnified by the Chosŏn court. Even King Sejong is reputed to have said, "Tan'gun of the Three Kingdoms—I have not heard of him."<sup>14</sup> However, this focus on Kija over Tan'gun uncovers several problems that must be addressed before understanding Korean conceptions of Tan'gun during the colonial period.

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<sup>12</sup> Sun Weiguo, "Legend Identity and History: The Historiographic Creation and Evolution of Tangun Choson and Kija Choson," *Chinese Studies in History* 44, no. 4 (Summer 2011): 21-22.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

James Grayson maintains that the mention of Kija in the *Samguk Yusa* indicates a later 15<sup>th</sup> century redaction on the earlier work.<sup>15</sup> This suggests that the focus on Kija was at the behest of the Chosŏn government. As shown above, the Neo-Confucian scholars would have naturally wanted to forge some historical connection with what they perceived as the epicenter of culture.

If Grayson is correct in claiming that this addition is a redaction, this would challenge claims such as Sun Weiguo's remark that, "All these factors reflect how *fervently* the Choson *people* worshipped Kija."<sup>16</sup> This presents two interesting points to be considered: First, Sun's remark certainly reflects the opinions of scholars but not necessarily those of the populace as a whole. Secondly, this means that Iryŏn's appeal to the mythic past would be uniquely Korean in character.

This demonstrates that the myth could not only be adapted to differing political climates, but also opens the possibility for a uniquely Korean identity similar to, but not directly tied to China. Moreover, this suggests a clear and distinct understanding of Korean identity existing as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, Iryŏn was concerned about preserving the folklore of Korea as a whole, implying an interest in the general understanding of the populace.<sup>17</sup> This focus on people would be prominent as

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<sup>15</sup> Grayson, *Myths and Legends From Korea*, 53.

<sup>16</sup> Sun, "Legend, Identity, and History," 30. Emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> Grayson, *Myths and Legends From Korea*, 26.

the Tan'gun myth was re-conceptualized during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the Second World War.

After the Japanese annexation, the main thrust for Koreans involved in the study of the Tan'gun myth was to reorient the tale back towards Korea by attempting to diminish the role of Kija.<sup>18</sup> The myth of Tan'gun provided a fertile field for the recovery and legitimization of an authentic Korean *minjok*. The term *minjok* grew to be a general term for "race" or ethnicity during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> This concept of the Korean nation as a race or ethnic group on the Korean peninsula would be influenced by the thoughts of Chinese intellectual Liang Qichao (1873-1928).

Following the protocol of prevailing Social Darwinian thought, Liang categorized nations into two camps: historical and unhistorical. The former group had been able to organize themselves into a unified entity while the latter were unable to do so and were subsumed by other groups. Liang further made the distinction between historical groups by judging them whether or not they could break free of their traditional territorial borders and make a global impact.<sup>20</sup> The idea of various *minjok*

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<sup>18</sup> James B. Palais, "A Search for Korean Uniqueness," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55, no. 2, (December 1995): 417.

<sup>19</sup> Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 172.

<sup>20</sup> Chizuko T. Allen, "Northeast Asia Centered Around Korea: Ch'oe Namsŏn's View of History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (November 1990): 789.

competing for the world stage combined with Liang's ideas could set the stage for the emergence of Korean history tied to some ancient Korean *minjok*.

By 1905, the Korean interest in Tan'gun grew as a host of journalists and intellectuals encountered the myth. The goals of some of these writers was to legitimize and historicize a genuine Korean *minjok* with Tan'gun as the founding father hoping to achieve a purely Korean lineage. One such example comes from Sin Ch'aeho's (1880-1936) 1908 publication "A New Reading of History" (Kr. *Toksa Sillon*). In this work, Sin sought to re-orient Korean history back towards Tan'gun and in doing so dispel other nation's historical influence on the peninsula.

For example, Sin purposely categorizes the Japanese with the Mongols as being a largely insignificant force upon Korean history. In this regard, Sin only considered the Japanese after the 16<sup>th</sup> century invasion of Hideyoshi but, even then, he maintained that the Korean kingdoms were superior to their Japanese counterparts.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Sin felt that Kija would not be compatible with a Tan'gun-centric *minjok*.

Sin was sure to point out that Kija was a foreigner and thus outside of the *minjok* that extended from Tan'gun's original mythic state. Sin questioned why a purely Korean nation would grant an outsider such prominence and instead claimed that Kija was

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<sup>21</sup> Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 183-184.

actually a vassal to Tan'gun's kingdom rather than its successor.<sup>22</sup> Sin even criticized Silla Dynasty's (668-935) unification of the peninsula since the Silla King Muryŏl (604-661) ignored Korean holdings in Manchuria. Regarding Muryŏl's failure, Sin stated that, "half of our ancestor Tan'gun's ancient lands have been lost for over nine hundred years."<sup>23</sup> By critiquing the past and the Chinese influence in the Tan'gun myth, Sin contributed to the creation of a unique Korean history that could allow for the emergence of a purely Korean *minjok*.<sup>24</sup>

Sin's contemporary, Ch'oe Namsŏn (1890-1957), contributed to a uniquely Korean approach to Korean history and ethnicity by appealing to the mythic past as well. Also attracted to Liang's Darwinism, Ch'oe actually hoped to see Korea assume the stage as a great national power. Even revealing the desire to see "people of the five continents kneeling before it [Korean Flag]"<sup>25</sup> The annexation would diminish his hopes for Korea's military domination but, his subsequent work would try and promote Korea as a powerhouse of Asian culture.

Like Sin, Ch'oe also delegitimized Japanese claims to Korean history. As shown previously, Japanese accounts often painted the Korean peninsula as existing in a

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>23</sup> Andre, Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 36.

<sup>24</sup> Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 191.

<sup>25</sup> Allen, "Asia Centered Around Korea," 790.

primitive state of disrepair. This would allow the Japanese to construct their own version of Korean history whereby Japanese influence over the peninsula was itself rooted in history and inevitable. Fearful of suffering the same fate as India or Egypt at the hands of the British, Ch'oe too appealed to the myth of Tan'gun.<sup>26</sup>

Selecting the *Samguk Yusa* as his reference point, Ch'oe came to advocate several interesting points concerning the myth. Appealing to Korea's shamanic practices (Kr. *musok*), Ch'oe argued that the term Tan'gun came to be understood and utilized as the title for shaman rulers of ancient Korea and that the mythical birth of Tan'gun symbolically represented the assimilation of tribes into a cohesive ancient Korean fold.<sup>27</sup>

Ch'oe took this shamanistic origin further by examining the linguistic origins of the Chinese *bai* (white) with the Korea *paek* (white). Developing this idea, he concluded that the ancient Korean rendering of *bai* actually referred to the term *pǎrk* meaning god, heaven, or sun and that it actually referred to some ancient form of Korean religion. Ch'oe termed this religion the "way of *pǎrk*" (even calling it Chōsen Shintō).<sup>28</sup> Ch'oe speculated that this indigenous religion revered mountains as a link to heaven and earth

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 792.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 795.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 796.

and was organized under a shaman-king (Tan'gun) representing heaven and wielding religious and political power.<sup>29</sup>

Building off of this theory, Ch'oe claimed that this "Korean Shintō" formed the centrality of an ancient cultural sphere that encompassed much of Northern Asia, Eurasia, and Japan. Through linguistic study he went as far as to maintain that the names of mountains (the supposed sites of worship) throughout this "sphere" were all derived from the ancient Korean term *pǎrk* (e.g. through linguistic change, *pǎrk* became rendered as *furu*, *fuku*, *hara*, and *hiko* in Japanese).<sup>30</sup> Ch'oe's theory not only grants Korea a unique and central position in Asia, but by virtue of the "way of *pǎrk*"'s influence, challenges other traditions'—such as Japanese Shintō—claims of exclusivity.

While Sin and Ch'oe's usage of Tan'gun mythology is certainly innovative, it is not without its problems. A large concern lies within the nationalistic color that paints their works. Both Sin and Ch'oe seem to be quite unapologetic with why they are reworking Korean history. Sin stated that, "Those who pick up the pen of the historian must first recognized the host *people* of their nation..." and in 1930, Ch'oe remarked that, "History cannot and should not be regarded as a science with no heart because it is learning for the sake of the *people*."<sup>31</sup> Both comments invoke a strong sense that they are

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 797.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 798.

<sup>31</sup> Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 182. Emphasis added; Allen, "Asia Centered Around Korea," 793.

writing with the explicit goal of advocating for and enhancing the idea of a Korean *minjok*.

For example, regarding the Japanese historical documents Sin dismissed them as “falsehoods”. Yet, when attempting to trace family lineages to Tan’gun, Sin has no problem accepting gaps in the records and the lack of Korean resources.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Ch’oe more or less took for granted that the “way of *pärk*” was indeed a central thread running through much of Asia. Ch’oe seems to disregard the possibility of independent shamanistic ritual and ideas. This is doubly interesting since it is quite likely that Korea’s own *musok* tradition was based upon Siberian shamanic culture.<sup>33</sup>

However, despite these problems, Sin and Ch’oe attempted to reorganize Korea around a purely Korean origin and explanation. By incorporating Tan’gun mythology they constructed a privileged, legitimate, and unique ethnic history despite Japanese domination; furthermore, they demonstrated how Korean culture was superior or central to others. However, the efforts of Sin and Ch’oe represented a more academic approach in appealing to Tan’gun mythology. Prior to their works, Korean religious leaders were already incorporating Tan’gun mythology into their own traditions.

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<sup>32</sup> Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 185.

<sup>33</sup> Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 113.

Aside from the myriad of *musok* practices spread through the Korean peninsula, the first major popular religious push incorporating Tan'gun can be seen in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Donghak Movement.

The ideas that became Donghak originate with Ch'oe Cheu (1824-1864), also known by the pen name Suun. Suun led an eclectic life as a poor *yangban*. In addition to studying the orthodox Confucian canon, Suun also studied Daoist and Buddhist texts as well.<sup>34</sup> After a revelation in 1860, Suun also incorporated Catholic style ritual and organization as well as indigenous spirit worship and the building of altars on mountains into a philosophy which Suun hoped would, "protect country and secure the masses."<sup>35</sup>

Donghak was originally conceived of as a challenge to Catholic missions and the social inequality of late Chosŏn. By tying the various religious strings together, Suun created a uniquely Korean institution that could not only stand against Western learning but could also work to solve the human problems of Koreans.

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<sup>34</sup> George L. Kallander, *Salvation Through Dissent: Tonghak Heterodoxy and Early Modern Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), 40-41.

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Weems, *Reform, Rebellion, and the Heavenly Way* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1964), 8-9; Kallander, *Salvation Through Dissent*, 42.

The major idea threading together Suun's eclectic philosophy was the notion of the "union of man and god" (Kr. *si chŏn ju*).<sup>36</sup> This principle combined the Confucian concept of the "gentleman" (Kr. *gunja*)—accessible only to a small section of the populous—with the Daoist idea of becoming immortal (Kr. *sin sŏn*) which remained a religious ideal.<sup>37</sup> The goal forged from this union is "the earthly divine person" (Kr. *ji sang sin sŏn*)<sup>38</sup>—a state whereby there is no distinction between spirit and matter.

This philosophy can be associated with Tan'gun mythology on a number of points. First, Suun employs the indigenous term *Hanalnim* (literally "one supreme being") to refer to god. Sang Jin Ahn suggests that this refers to *musok's* own association with Tan'gun as a chief heavenly deity (despite the convoluted nature of Korean deities) and the influence of this indigenous movement on Donghak.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, Suun maintains that the spirit can "evolve" into something greater by virtue of the "union of man and god."<sup>40</sup> Again, this parallels Tan'gun's own anthropomorphic nature; Tan'gun *becomes* the mountain god. Thirdly, Donghak philosophy advocates the non-duality of

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<sup>36</sup> Sang Jin Ahn, *Continuity and Transformation: Religious Synthesis in East Asia* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), 54.

<sup>37</sup> Ahn, *Continuity and Transformation*, 65.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 52; Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 128 & 131.

<sup>40</sup> Weems, *Reform, Rebellion, and the Heavenly Way*, 9.

matter and spirit. Likewise, Tan'gun holds the position of being both a heavenly deity and an earthly deity granting him a divine and material character.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, Sang attributes a "shaman ethos" to the Donghak movement and compares the movement itself to the *musok* ritual of *kut* (a sort of shamanic ritual).<sup>42</sup> In this regard, the movement is fully participating in a shamanic ritual structured within the framework of a popular social movement. This suggests a significant attachment to indigenous Korean religious practice that holds a place of reverence for Tan'gun.

However, more interestingly this attachment to Tan'gun is even seen in Korean Christianity. Just as in China, a problem for Christian missionaries in Korea was what proper term should be used to express the notion of the Judeo-Christian God. By 1904, the missionary Horace Underwood (1859-1916) adopted the term *Hananim* after learning that the origin of the term lay with Tan'gun, the worship of whom was considered sufficiently monotheistic in character.<sup>43</sup> However, this term was being used as early as 1889.<sup>44</sup>

The choice to appeal to indigenous Tan'gun worship had a surprising consequence. As the term continued to gain popularity, this prompted further research

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<sup>41</sup> Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 128.

<sup>42</sup> Ahn, *Continuity and Transformation*, 74 & 76.

<sup>43</sup> Sung-Deuk Oak, *The Making of Korean Christianity: Protestant Encounters with Korean Religions, 1876-1915* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 63.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

into the nature of Tan'gun worship. This revealed the native Korean version of a Holy Trinity (Kr. *samsǒng*) consisting of Hwanin, Hwanung, and Tan'gun.<sup>45</sup> This gave missionaries the impression that Koreans were merely waiting for the true gospel.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, according to Sung-Deuk Oak, the adoption of *Hanǎnim* curiously helped to bolster the resistance of Korean Christians using the term against Japanese subjugation.<sup>47</sup> The link to their mythic past—which according to missionaries was so close to Christian truth—and the fulfillment of that truth offers a distinct position in this regard.

The revitalization of Tan'gun worship on a larger scale during colonial Korea unfolded in two ways; a more academic approach as represented above by Sin and Ch'oe, a more religious approach as evidenced by the underlying philosophy of Donghak, and surprisingly, a unique link to Tan'gun by Korean Christians. However, while retaining a connection to Tan'gun each of these groups still sought slightly different goals. Sin, Ch'oe and other like-minded intellectuals examined the Tan'gun myth aiming to legitimize the notion that Korea had a distinct identity apart from China, and use this to invalidate Japanese claims to the peninsula.

The creation of a purely Korean *minjok* was supposed to invest the populace with a unique character that could stand on its own feet in a modern world, and, to an extent,

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<sup>45</sup> Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 128.

<sup>46</sup> Oak, *The Making of Korean Christianity*, 81.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

the efforts of Korean intellectuals did indeed have an impact. On November 3, 1921, Koreans celebrated the first “Descent from Heaven Day” commemorating the birth of Tan’gun.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, academic discourse on Tan’gun bolstered the emergence and propagation of Taejong-gyo; a religious sect centered on Tan’gun.<sup>49</sup>

Interestingly, Taejong-gyo’s story actually begins in Japan. Taejong-gyo’s founder, Na Ch’öl (1863-1916), claimed that in 1908, while living in a Japanese inn, he was visited by an elderly Japanese man. This elderly gentleman gave him an abundance of texts regarding Tan’gun and after receiving them, Na supposedly underwent some sort of religious experience.<sup>50</sup> Whether or not this actually happened is of course debatable. However we do know from colonial police reports that by 1909 Na was in Seoul preaching the importance of Tan’gun. On January 25<sup>th</sup> of the same year Na proclaimed:

From antiquity, among the religions of the Korean race, Tan’gun has been worshipped as the ancestor of the Korean race and as the father of the nation. By returning to Tan’gun, we can encourage the purification and unity of the national spirit as well as raise the national consciousness of the Korean race. At the same time, the purpose is to strengthen racial unity for national independence and to perpetuate the existence of the Korean race.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Sun, “Legend, Identity, and History,” 39.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Hyung Il Pai, *Constructing ‘Korean’ Origins: A Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 267.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 267-268.

The religious thought espoused by Na advocated for the preservation of the Korean race by appealing to their mythic progenitor. Belief in Tan'gun, would enable Koreans to retain their ethnic purity and encourage them to actively seek to create a uniquely Korean ethnic space. This sort of thought provided a strong rallying point for notions of Korean independence and proved to be a headache for Japanese authorities.

Unsurprisingly, the Japanese quickly sought to silence the sect. In October 1910, Na and his followers actually moved their congregation north to Paekdusan Mountain to escape persecution by Japanese authorities and in 1915 the colonial government officially banned the religion.<sup>52</sup> Despite the sanctions, Taejong-gyo continued to thrive, and would claim some 300,000 converts including approximately 80% of the Korean population living in Manchuria.<sup>53</sup> In response to such figures, Japanese Officials actually outlawed Taejong-gyo worship in Manchuria in 1926 and threatened to immolate anyone caught participating in the sect's activities.<sup>54</sup>

Donghak and Christianity also helped to promote a unique sense of identity as well. Though not quite as direct, Donghak's syncretic nature seems to have been organized around shamanic principles connected with the nature of Tan'gun. This connection allows for a solidified approach to social problems by appealing to

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

indigenous beliefs. In this way Donghak's appeal to Tan'gun reinforced an idea of solidarity based around this tradition. Christians too, benefited from association with the mythic past. Despite becoming Christians, the supposed monotheistic nature of Tan'gun still lends a special and unique status by virtue of their ethnic ties. These ethnic ties proved to be troublesome for the Japanese and provided a unique problem for Ogasawara's intention to include Tan'gun in the Chōsen Shrine.

## 7. The Sun Rises Over Namsan: Ogasawara and the Shrine Debate

In order to distinguish its territories, Japanese officials classified holdings as either being *naichi* or *gaichi*. The former term described lands that were Japan proper—the main island and Okinawa and Hokkaido—and the latter term referred to land not within that immediate vicinity and acquired after 1868.<sup>1</sup> As demonstrated previously, the spread of Shintō was facilitated by a steady stream of Japanese settlers and Shintō missions emanating from the *naichi*. By the end of the war in 1945, there were some 1,640 oversea shrines spread throughout the *gaichi*, 916 of which were in Korea alone.<sup>2</sup>

As shrines were constructed in these newly acquired territories, common protocol allowed for the individual colonial government to establish one shrine as the highest ranking (J. *Sō Jinja* in accordance to policy on the Japanese mainland.<sup>3</sup> These *Sō Jinja* were typically enshrined with a trio of deities selected from amongst terrestrial *kami* (J. *kunitsu-no-kami*) associated with protection in order to ensure the spread of Japanese settlements and influence.<sup>4</sup> These deities tended to be associated with the region, even sometimes including local tradition.

For example, in 1900, the Japanese established the Taiwan Shrine as the supreme shrine on the island. In addition to enshrining three “earthly *kami*” they also enshrined the spirit of the late Prince Kitashirakawa Yoshihisa (1847-1895) who had died of malaria

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<sup>1</sup> Suga, “A Concept of ‘Overseas Shintō Shrines,’” 48.

<sup>2</sup> Nakajima, “Shintō Deities that Crossed the Sea,” 29.

<sup>3</sup> Suga, “A Concept of ‘Overseas Shintō Shrines,’” 53.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

on the island. Furthermore, the Kaizan Shrine established in 1896 actually enshrined Tei Seikō (Ch. *Zhèng Chéng-Kōng*) a harbinger of Chinese influence on the island.<sup>5</sup>

However, it was not until the heightened war effort in 1944 that Amaterasu would be enshrined in the nationally supported Taiwan Shrine.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, great shrines in Kwangtung, Manchukuo, and the Koror Islands did not enshrine Amaterasu until 1938 and 1940 respectively coinciding with Japanese wartime mobilization a year before in 1937.<sup>7</sup> The inclusion of Amaterasu was intended to consolidate unity and promote patriotic sentiment. However, upon its completion in 1925, Chōsen Shrine had already enshrined Amaterasu alongside Emperor Meiji attempting to symbolically bring Koreans into the Japanese fold. While this was not the first instance of Amaterasu or Emperor Meiji's enshrinement, it was the first to take place at a *Sō Jinja*. It is important to note though, that this decision was not without contestation.

The original debate over who exactly to enshrine at Chōsen began in 1906.<sup>8</sup> Shintō priests belonging to the National Association for Shintō Priests (J. *Zenkoku Shinshokaku*) petitioned to the then Resident General of Korea, Itō Hirobumi, for the construction of a *Sō Jinja* in Seoul. Surprisingly, the Association priests advocated for the enshrinement of none other than Korea's mythic progenitor Tan'gun alongside Amaterasu.

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<sup>5</sup> Nakajima, "Shintō Deities that Crossed the Sea," 30.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>8</sup> Suga, "A Concept of 'Overseas Shintō Shrines,'" 54.

However, the inclusion of Tan'gun was not without ulterior motives. The priests were inspired largely by the elder priest Tsunoda Tadayuki's interest in the god.

Tsunoda had been influenced by Hirata Atsutane's (1776-1843) rendering of Shintō and his interest in Tan'gun reflected some aspect of Hirata's thoughts on national learning.<sup>9</sup>

Hirata had belonged to a group of nativist thinkers including Kamo Mabuchi (1697-1769) and Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) who had sought to re-invigorate the culture of ancient Japan by examining Japanese classics such as the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.<sup>10</sup>

Hirata drew upon these sources and other Shintō texts to help lay the foundations for the idea that Japan and her people were superior due to their mythic origins and that all other foreign territories and inhabitants were merely, "formed out of the foam of the sea."<sup>11</sup> Tsunoda took this idea in a somewhat different direction.

Tsunoda acknowledged Tan'gun as Susano-no-Mikoto; one of Amaterasu's younger brothers.<sup>12</sup> This identification allowed him to interpret Korea's mythical past as being part and parcel with Japan's own. Furthermore, by referring to Tan'gun as the *younger* brother of Amaterasu, Tsunoda's viewpoint still allowed for Japanese supremacy.

The priest's interest in Tan'gun also coincided with two other events that could potentially bolster support for Tan'gun's enshrinement. On the Japanese main lands,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Walter A. Skya, *Japan's Holy War: The Ideology of Radical Shintō Ultrnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 222-223.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>12</sup> Suga, "A Concept of 'Overseas Shintō Shrines,'" 54.

ideas put forth by thinkers such as Kita Sadakichi (1871-1939) would crystalize into an idea that Japanese and Koreans had traditionally been part of the same ethnic group. Kita proposed that the original historic descendants of Amaterasu were gradually absorbed by other nearby ethnic groups. Kita described the relationship with Korean as being a “small branch” distinction as opposed to a “large branch” distinction.<sup>13</sup> Any “corruption” of Korean culture was due to ethnic differences that had multiplied since an idyllic past. The identification of Tan’gun with Susanoo-no-Mikoto would allow Koreans to reconnect with that ideal mythic relationship with Japan.

The appeal of Tan’gun also coincided with the emerging interest in Tan’gun amongst Koreans. In addition to the more subtle aspects of Tan’gun’s Japanese appeal, Shintō priests also hoped that including a native Korean deity might help to drum up support and interest from Korean subjects. Unfortunately for those priests, Korean nationalistic endeavors stymied any immediate hope for the enshrinement of a Korean deity: in 1909 Resident General Itō was shot and killed by Korean national An Jung-gŭn and in 1919 Korean leaders organized the mass March 1<sup>st</sup> Independence Movement. The issue over enshrinement was not over however, and the next round of discussions included more people than Shintō priests.

One of those involved was the Japanese intellectual Ogasawara Shōzō. Ogasawara was born into a family of hereditary Shintō priests tending a small shrine in

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<sup>13</sup> Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, 83.

Aomori prefecture in 1892. Ogasawara went on to complete a seminary course for Shintō priests taught through Tokyo's Kokugakuin University in 1912 but had chosen to pursue a career in writing and was not assigned to any particular shrine.<sup>14</sup> By 1922, Ogasawara had even published several books about Japanese mythology and folklore, and had also gained some notoriety due to his participation in the Japanese anti-communist group "Band for Preventing the Red Trend" (J. *Sekika Bōshidan*)—even showing up in newspapers and police reports due to his activities.<sup>15</sup>

Ogasawara's first encounter with Korea was a response to the aftermath of the Kantō earthquake. On September 1, 1923, a powerful earthquake rocked Tokyo and surrounding prefectures. The catastrophe caused extensive damage and caused between 100,000 and 140,000 deaths.<sup>16</sup> The ensuing chaos incited a Japanese led witch hunt against the Korean populace in areas struck by the earthquake and would result in approximately 6,000 Korean deaths until vigilante activity was stopped by official police action on September 5<sup>th</sup>.<sup>17</sup> As a result of the unfortunate consequences of the earthquake, on December 23, 1923, Ogasawara helped to promote a Shintō ceremony for the souls of

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<sup>14</sup> Suga, "A Concept of 'Overseas Shintō Shrines,'" 54-55.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Sonia Ryang, "The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Massacre of Koreans in 1923," *Anthropological Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 732.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 733-736.

the persecuted Koreans. During the event, Ogasawara expressed his sympathy for Koreans and a sense of disappointment that Japanese citizens committed such acts.<sup>18</sup>

It was also roughly during this time that the Chōsen Shrine issue was again circulating. Again, Shintō priests advocated for the enshrinement of Tan'gun. This time, priests attempted a more subtle route and sought to facilitate the importance of Tan'gun as a progenitor through Shintō rather than associating Tan'gun directly to a specific Shintō deity. By enshrining a general "land soul" spirit—Chōsen Kunitama-no-Kami—priests argued that they could accommodate the spirits of all great historical Korean figures.<sup>19</sup> If Koreans could see the Korean heroes of the past given the "honor" of being enshrined in a state sanctioned shrine, priestly interlocutors in the controversy hoped that more Koreans could become interested in Tan'gun *through* Shintō and thus become more amiable towards assimilation.

Colonial authorities on the other hand, held a differing viewpoint on the matter however. After the surge of nationalistic sentiment in 1919 the colonial government faced a problem on the peninsula. Officials realized that Koreans were not simply going to naturally assimilate into Japanese culture as officials such as Resident General Itō assumed. In order for Koreans to be properly reconfigured into Japanese subjects, the

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<sup>18</sup> Suga, "A Concept of 'Overseas Shintō Shrines,'" 55.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 56.

cultural standards expected of the Japanese would have to be lowered in order to allow more Koreans access to avenues of assimilation.<sup>20</sup>

Amaterasu represented the root mythic origination of both Koreans and the Japanese while Emperor Meiji (considered an actual descendant of the sun goddess) served as the “patriarch” that had unified the two countries.<sup>21</sup> The actual presence of the two spirits in the shrine demonstrates a spiritual and physical resurrection of the idealized mythic past. Since the shrine was located in Seoul, this actually allowed Koreans direct access to this symbolic structure. Furthermore, as the first *Sō Jinja* to house Amaterasu outside of the *naichi*, this granted Korea a special place within the confines of the Japanese Empire forging a symbolic tie that could maintain the authority of the Japanese but also allow Koreans to interact directly with a shared mythic past.

Both priests and colonial officials were primarily interested in utilizing Shintō in relationship with uncovering the origins of Korean ethnicity. By investigating Korean origins, Shintō could be used as a tool to subsume Koreans into a greater ethnic pool related to Japan or employed to legitimize the Korean past vis-à-vis Shintō. In both cases the goal was aimed at taming the Korean populace and making Japanese status an appealing choice. Ogasawara, on the other hand, was much more interested in the actual religious aspects of Shintō in regard to Korea.

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<sup>20</sup> Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policy in Colonial Korea 1910-1945*, 111-112.

<sup>21</sup> Suga, “A Concept of “Oversea Shintō Shrines,”” 57.

Ogasawara was not able to directly participate in debate on the peninsula itself. Instead, he used the political clout gained from his anti-communist activities to let his opinions on the matter be heard by Japanese officials.<sup>22</sup> Ogasawara agreed with priests on the importance of understanding that Shintō related to people through the framework of land and ethnicity but argued for the creation of a new sort of worship to be facilitated through the shrine.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, Ogasawara envisioned a synthesis of indigenous worship of Korean deities (namely Tan'gun) and the general framework of Shintō. This demonstrates that Ogasawara held a rather interesting view concerning the nature of Shintō. This would be fully expressed in later works by Ogasawara.

For example, in a 1933 publication entitled "Oversea Shintō Shrines" (*J. Kaigai Jinja*) Ogasawara wrote that:

Any "object" which is alienated from peoples' actual lives will lose its *raison d'être*. Shinto shrines are "sites for the performance of the state ritual" of course, but forcibly maintaining entities alienated from people's actual lives through state power would make shrines lose their religious nature and make them something like a monument. If this principle were to be disregarded, any shrine, not just the *Chōsen Jingū* but also others in Korea and Manchuria, and even shrines on the mainland, would gradually come to lose their ties with people's individual lives, social lives, and national lives in the future. We should keep this firmly in mind.<sup>24</sup>

This quotation highlights Ogasawara's feelings on the character and status that *Sō Jinja* and lesser shrines ought to embody.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 51.

The first interesting point to consider in this regard is the idea of “object” and how this figures into the religious nature of Shintō shrines. Ogasawara stated that, “In Shintō shrines, *kami* are the *subject*, and building are the object.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, the term “object” refers to anything that is not the *kami* associated with the shrine or ceremonies including the actual building, vestments, ritual devices and so forth. According to Ogasawara, the focus of the shrine should be the nature of the *kami* and paying respect to that deity.

Concerning the deities themselves, Ogasawara took a rather broad stance in characterizing the Shintō pantheon. For Ogasawara, any religious miracle or extraordinary historical event could be traced back to some deity.<sup>26</sup> This understanding was not only exclusive to Japan. Ogasawara encouraged Japanese settlers to maintain a spiritual relationship with any new lands they settled and even suggested that the spirits of George Washington and Thomas Edison be enshrined to celebrate and respect the founding of America and discovery of electricity respectively.<sup>27</sup>

In this regard, Ogasawara can perhaps be seen as a Shintō “version” of Buddhist thinkers such as Kitabatake Dōryū (1820-1907), Shaku Sōen (1859-1919), and Shaku Kōzen (1849-1924). Kitabatake, and both Shakus had all traveled to South East Asia and interacted with native Buddhist traditions and helped promote a transnational

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 63. Emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 63.

exchanges of thought.<sup>28</sup> In particular, their experiences in South East Asia resulted with a new found importance for the historical Buddha—Śākyamuni—with regards to their own Japanese Buddhist traditions.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Ogasawara found that deities outside of the Japanese archipelago could find a certain place in Shintō.

Ogasawara felt that the polytheistic nature of Shintō was its greatest strength since it could include beliefs held by colonized subjects and foreigners and show respect for indigenous traditions. Ogasawara felt that this gave Japan a unique edge when compared against Western styles of colonization that appealed to the Christian concept of god. Ogasawara maintained that Shintō could provide Japanese colonial efforts with a gentler approach since his conception of Shintō sought to harmonize nations along spiritual lines rather than subjugate them against the idea of an omnipotent god.<sup>30</sup>

However, in order to promote harmony, the deities and spirits residing in shrines had to be made manifest in a way that the religious connection to people's daily life were not infringed upon. If this were to happen Ogasawara feared that it would diminish what was supposed to be a celebration of the divine into nothing more than a mere monument. In this regard, government usage of the shrines as founts of assimilation policy would defeat the shrines purpose as far as Ogasawara was concerned. Expressing this point further, he characterized oversea shrines in Japanese

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<sup>28</sup> Richard M. Jaffe, "Seeking Shakyamuni: Travel and the Reconstruction of Japanese Buddhism," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2004); 68.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>30</sup> Suga, "A Concept of 'Overseas Shintō Shrines,'" 62.

territories as being “non-religious” due to the political nature associated with them.<sup>31</sup>

This “non-religious” nature was of course the goal of colonial officials, and Ogasawara’s critique in this regard highlights a different understanding of what the purpose of Shintō shrines should have been. Regardless of the protests by priests and Ogasawara however, the colonial government settled on the enshrinement of Amaterasu and Emperor Meiji which was carried out in 1925.

After the debates, Ogasawara himself does not seem to have given up on his unique view of Shintō however. During the late 1920s, he traveled to Japanese settlements in Brazil. There, he was particularly moved by the settler Uetsuka Shūhei (1876-1935)—Uetsuka had actually enshrined the spirits of the indigenous tribe that had existed prior to any Japanese settlement.<sup>32</sup> Again, from 1931-1941, Ogasawara traveled regularly throughout the Japanese Empire frequenting Manchuria, Korea, and China in order to speak with ethnic leaders and local priests.<sup>33</sup> Sometime in 1934, he planned a prototype shrine for Japanese and Koreans living in Beijing that could serve as the blueprint for subsequent shrines. In 1940, he eventually enshrined a local land spirit in the Beijing Shrine alongside Amaterasu and Emperor Meiji drawing harsh criticism from

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 61.

Japanese authorities. Indeed, at the end of 1941 Japanese officials decreed that all future enshrinements would have to conform to a list of acceptable imperial deities.<sup>34</sup>

Given Ogasawara's rather syncretic view it is not unreasonable to imagine a distinctly Korean worship that could fit seamlessly into the Shintō pantheon and retain some unique localized character. However, if the government had implemented Ogasawara's ideas concerning Shintō shrines and had enshrined Tan'gun, would this have made any significant impact on the appeal of Shintō to Korean subjects? While Ogasawara's thoughts are certainly innovative it seems that they largely ignore the Korean sentiment and remain idealistic in nature.

As demonstrated previously, Koreans had historically had their own understanding of Tan'gun and his associated mythology as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century. As the Japanese now threatened to subsume Korean ethnicity so had the Mongols threatened Korea's royal line. In the latter case Korea's appealed to the mythology as a means to solidify their status as a cultured civilization in relation to China. However, it is important to point out that during this time there was no real sense of a Korean identity. The emergence of thinkers such as Ch'oe and Sin and large-scale movements by religious leaders such as Suun and his predecessors would provide a new understanding of the myth by appealing to the notion of *minjok* that could stand against the Japanese intrusion.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 65.

First, Suun's Donghak movement would be problematic for any potential syncretic approach advocated by Ogasawara. Despite the multifaceted nature of Donghak, the movement's philosophical underpinnings were derivative of Korean shamanism and folk religion including the Tan'gun mythos. This provided a solid indigenous basis for the movement and it should be noted that during the 1919 independence movements the successors of Donghak ideology (Ch'öndogyo) played a prominent role and by 1920 was amongst the largest religious groups on the peninsula with some 300,000 households.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Tonghak and its derivatives maintained a more or less monotheistic character which would have made Ogasawara's polytheistic focus quite ineffective.

The monotheistic nature could also be found in founder Na Ch'öl's Taejong-gyo religion. Taejong-gyo was explicitly centered on Tan'gun. The underlying idea behind this religion was that Koreans already possessed their own native deity, Tan'gun.<sup>36</sup> Why would Koreans worship a foreign entity? In addition to the nativist character, Na also characterized the deity as a trinity along the lines of Christianity consisting of Hwanin, Hwanung, and Tan'gun or, creator, educator, ruler respectively.<sup>37</sup> Considering the insular nature of this faith and the monotheistic qualities, this would provide a challenge

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<sup>35</sup> Yong-Choon Kim, "Ch'öndogyo and Other New Religions of Korea," in *Religion and Society in Contemporary Korea*, ed. Lewis R. Lancaster and Richard K. Payne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 253.

<sup>36</sup> Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 118-119.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

to the syncretic Shintō Ogasawara hope to advocate since it placed Tan'gun in the broad spectrum of a pantheon of Shintō deities.

Intellectual developments by Koreans also proved a problem for the enshrinement of Tan'gun. During his lifetime Ogasawara was able to establish some relationship with Ch'oe, and Suga Kōji suggests this may have had some impact on Ch'oe's thought.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, according to some Korean scholars such as Song I-Söp, Ch'oe borrowed too heavily from Japanese thought to be considered worthwhile.<sup>39</sup> However, as shown, Ch'oe sought to organize an entire sphere of influence in Asia that had the Tan'gun mythos at its center. Likewise, Sin's works magnified the importance of Tan'gun in forging the unique character of the Korean people.

Additionally, Koreans such as Yi ūn-Song (1903-1982) and Hyōn Jin-gōn (1900-1943) helped propagate nationalistic interpretations of Tan'gun by readjusting the "playful" nature that Shintō advocated. During the 1930s, both writers believed that Myohyangsan Mountain was Tan'gun's final resting place. Advertising their ideas in Korean language newspapers, the pair essentially acted as travel agents for a sort of nationalistic tourism that could serve the dual purpose of solidifying a sense of Tan'gun and presumably providing an enjoyable visit.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Suga, "A Concept of 'Overseas Shintō Shrines,'" 57.

<sup>39</sup> Allen, "Northeast Asia Centered Around Korea," 788.

<sup>40</sup> Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at its Zenith*, 127.

With this in mind, Ogasawara's intentions of including Tan'gun seem counterintuitive to the desire to make Shintō more appealing to a Korean audience. For intellectuals, the enshrinement of Tan'gun would merely allow for another avenue of promoting Korea by appealing to the mythical past. The enshrinement would no doubt be manipulated as an instance of the Japanese revering their own native god thus bolstering their own nationalistic ideas about history. If nothing else this would serve to prove Sin's opinion that Japan was never a major force in Korean history. Similarly, the placement of Tan'gun in relation to the Shintō pantheon would be odious to more monotheistic and nationalistic religious interpretations of Tan'gun.

Additionally, there were matters of cultural divide to consider. As mentioned previously, the "playful" nature of shrine worship could act as a deterrent but, on the other hand, other Koreans were simply not at all interested in such a foreign tradition. For example, in 1925 Yun Ch'i-ho poignantly expressed his distaste for the Chōsen Shrine itself stating in his diary that, "A Shintō Shrine has *no* meaning for the Koreans."<sup>41</sup> Again in 1939 regarding the inaugural flight of the airplane "No. 1 Chōsen" he remarks on the accompanying Shintō ritual claiming that the ceremony "was interesting though meaningless to the Korean spectators."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Yun Ch'i-Ho, "Diary of Yun Ch'i-Ho 8", <http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?itemId=sa&setId=10345&position=4>, (September 29, 1925).

<sup>42</sup> Yun Ch'i-Ho, "Diary of Yun Ch'i-Ho 10", <http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?itemId=sa&setId=10345&position=7> (April 17, 1932).

Japanese efforts to expose younger Koreans to Shintō also seemed to suffer from a relative disinterest as well. In roughly 1944 at the age of nine, one Korean recalls that during school ceremonies to revere the emperor he and his other classmates regularly cut-up during such events implying that, despite the heightened colonial efforts, Shintō still failed to excite more impressionable members of Korean society.<sup>43</sup>

It is also worth considering what was likely to occur if the colonial government had actually incorporated Ogasawara's suggestion and enshrined Tan'gun. Ignoring for the moment that this would most likely play into the hands of Korean nationalists, what would have happened if it had been embraced? From the Japanese perspective, how would this affect the nature of Shintō as a whole? Much of early Meiji development of Shintō was concerned with creating a unique niche for Shintō and its priests in the national polity, investing it with a special "supra-religious" status.

The inclusion of a subaltern "de facto" priest conducting ritual at a *state* sanctioned shrine would no doubt serve as an affront to the priestly community. Such an arrangement would threaten priestly status by including people outside of Japanese stock jeopardizing the ethnic integrity of the nation. This also threatened Japan's perceived special relationship with the Shintō deities by allowing a potentially competing figure of foreign design enter into the mythic arena. This would no doubt be

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<sup>43</sup> Kang, *Under the Black Umbrella*, 115-116.

a highly uncomfortable situation for the vast majority of priests whose importance hinged on the special status of Japan and Japanese citizens in relation to their deities.

In this regard Ogasawara's approach seems to suffer from two dangerous problems. First, this places the subaltern on the same status level as the colonizer; Koreans would be suddenly equal to their Shintō counterparts and still able to interact with their own ethnic deity. This would grant them all the legitimacy they need and the colonial project's goal of assimilation truly becomes moot as there is nothing for the colonized to aspire for.

Secondly, as well as upsetting the status quo with the inclusion of the subaltern, what did this entail for Koreans themselves? The efforts of the Keijō Shrine to include Korean *yangban* to participate in the ritual resulted in controversy over the vestments used for the service itself. The Korean presiding over a 1931 ceremony—Chōn Sōng-uk—expressed hesitancy over wearing the sandals typically worn by Japanese priests (J. *asaura*) since they were associated with a Korean slur against Japanese, *jjok'bari* (literally, "cloven feet").<sup>44</sup> This highlights the purely societal tension that such a monumental merger of tradition could manifest over such relatively minor issues.

Despite Ogasawara's innovative interpretation of Shintō it should also be noted that there is a problem that has to be addressed. For example, in 1953 Ogasawara wrote that, "Shintō shrines are for Japanese people first of all...But we wish someday foreign

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<sup>44</sup> Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 87.

people would worship at them..."<sup>45</sup> This statement seems to indicate that while he sought to incorporate other traditions into the Shintō pantheon at face value, at its core Shintō was primarily for Japanese subjects. Furthermore, any native concepts would be framed within the context of the Shintō pantheon subsuming them into a Japanese framework. While not as overt as the colonial government, regardless of his pantheistic attempts, Ogasawara was still a product of his age. This subtle imperialism coupled with the existing awareness and theories concerning Tan'gun suggests that with or without Ogasawara's more inclusive approach to shrine controversy, spiritual assimilation through the Chōsen Shrine would prove to be a fruitless endeavor.

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<sup>45</sup> Suga, "A Concept of "Overseas Shintō Shrines,"" 66.

## 8. Setting Sun: Conclusions

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan's colonial ambitions radiated forth towards the Korean peninsula hoping to reinvigorate what was seen as fallow ground with rays of imperial sunlight. The policies enacted through the some thirty-five years of colonial rule sought to engineer an environment to turn Koreans into imperial subjects. In this regard, Shintō had its role to play in that process.

Colonial officials banked on using Shintō to imbue in Koreans a sense of "Japaneseness" and solidarity. Shintō utilized this way could account for Koreans as being the "lost sheep" of some perfect mythic lineage. From the perspective of colonial officials, assimilation was seen as granting the "privilege" of being Japanese to the Korean populace by including them into the line (albeit a distant line) of those descended from Amaterasu herself. By investing colonial ambition with such a notion, Japanese officials could legitimize their aggression within East Asia and moreover legitimize the superior place of Japan and Japanese ethnicity.

However, during this time Koreans also developed and solidified their own understanding of their mythic origins and halcyon past. Intellectuals such as Sin and Ch'oe set about turning the supposed Japanese notions of superiority on their head by appealing to the Tan'gun mythos. By doing so, these thinkers could not only legitimize a unique Korean *minjok*, but actually reorient any notions of superiority back to the lofty peaks of Korean mountains as opposed to the sun rising over the Japanese archipelago.

Likewise, this notion found expression amongst religious groups which could facilitate a direct and personal experience with “Tan’gun *Harabōji* (Korean term for grandfather).”<sup>1</sup> This religious appeal could further solidify the notion of a uniquely Korean origin and dispense them on a popular level.

What then can be said of Ogasawara’s thoughts on Shintō? I believe that examining Ogasawara’s thought alongside the emergence of interest in Tan’gun offers a unique view into the colonial project and the nature of the subaltern. Even if Japanese officials had enshrined Tan’gun, it seems doubtful that this would be enough to heighten the effectiveness of assimilation policies. While the enshrinement of Tan’gun by the Japanese would have been a highly interesting move, it would seem that Koreans were simply not particularly interested and furthermore, had already constructed an indigenous spiritual superiority centered on their own ethnic god. Ogasawara maintained that Shintō could break free of the Japanese homeland in some sense and furthermore held that Shintō was fundamentally a celebration of some religious manifestation that could be linked to peoples’ everyday life. As such, *all* deities could be included within Shintō due to its polytheism. In this regard, Tan’gun could prove to be a perfectly acceptable candidate for enshrinement at the Chōsen Shrine.

Yet, as demonstrated above, this would complicate the status quo of both Shintō priests and Koreans. Additionally, such a system would either be manipulated by or

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<sup>1</sup> Hogarth, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, 104.

ignored by Koreans since they were already captivated by the reemergence of their own mythic past. While this reemergence was mostly likely brought about due to Japanese infringement, the reactionary appeal to Tan'gun mythology goes as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Likewise, even though the rhetoric was shaded by contemporary terms of ethnicity and nation, the appeal still sought to establish the same principle: Korea is a unique and ancient place.

However, regarding Ogasawara's position there are several points that can be elucidated upon; the first being with regards to the concept of imagination. Like the British in India, the Japanese used empirical knowledge to gain information about their colonial subjects. To use David Ludden's words the British in India sought to, "appropriate knowledge that was locked away in the minds of Indian commercial, judicial, military, and revenue specialists."<sup>2</sup> Through this, colonial administrators could reinvent native information along rational and scientific avenues that could be easily understood by the British mind.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Japanese Yearbooks contain plenty of information enumerating population, geography, weather patterns etc. yet the Japanese also seem to have a certain knowledge rooted in the mythic past that also offers a unique perspective on Japan's colonial imagination.

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<sup>2</sup> David Ludden, "Orientalist Empiricism: Transformation of Colonial Knowledge," in *Orientalism and the Post-Colonial Predicament: Perspectives on South East Asia*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 253.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

In this regard, Shintō become another way to frame knowledge or “measure” the world in order to reveal something about the Korean subject. The frequent critics of Korean laziness, stupor, or general lack of spirit suggests an interesting tie between observation and an evaluation of spiritual worth rooted in a Shintō worldview of a special Japanese ethnicity. The only way to correct this imbalance is of course for Koreans to “become” Japanese themselves.

Ogasawara too seems to possess this mindset though perhaps in a much broader sense since his main focus was on the actual effect of the *kami* and associated shrine on the actual life of the individual. In this fashion knowledge is arranged within a constellation of spirituality or lack thereof. In this regard, this could represent a uniquely Japanese way of framing “meaningful” knowledge about the colonized.

This could account for another avenue by which to account for the ultimate mismanagement of shrines and assimilation policy. This spiritual “empiricism” would continue to frame Koreans as a mass of spiritless faces despite their own active construction of a similar system centered on Tan’gun as opposed to Shintō deities.

Another intriguing aspect of Ogasawara’s thought lies in the transnational character he ascribes to Shintō. Both Ogasawara and his Buddhist counterparts sought to demonstrate how outside thought and traditions could be incorporated into their respective traditions. Through this, they all strove to redefine relatively narrow traditions into a universal practice. However, Ogasawara’s case is especially interesting

given the insular nature and indigenous character of Shintō. In this regards, we can see another avenue of transnational religious exchange that can challenge more bellicose perceptions of Shintō.

Regarding Ogasawara however, there is clearly a limitation on how far he could have pursued this. The Japanese government did not much care for his lobbying activities China, Manchuria, and Korea. Furthermore, the end of the Second World War destroyed much of the legitimacy Shintō had once held.<sup>4</sup> However, Ogasawara's attempts still highlight a unique attempt to diversify an otherwise ethno-centric tradition despite political chastisement.

The enshrinement issue also helps to reveal some of the intrinsic contradiction with the colonial system. Despite the supposed desire to properly assimilate Koreans, the colonial government could not escape the inherent inequality in the system between the colonizer and the "other."<sup>5</sup> Even if assimilation attempts facilitated by Shintō shrines had been successful would the "Japanized" Korean subject be perceived in relation to a "true" Japanese citizen? Likewise, how would the Tan'gun "priest" in Ogasawara's model be perceived? Both would no doubt be placed lower on the hierarchical ladder—both culturally and religiously Koreans would be kept at a distance despite assimilation.

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<sup>4</sup> Hardacre, *Shintō and The State*, 142.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Thomas. *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel, and Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 142.

However the topic of Korean Shintō shrines surely deserves more research. As Nakajima Michio astutely observes, little has been done with the hundreds of semi-shrines dotting Korea and the reaches of former Japanese holdings.<sup>6</sup> The nature of these sites could provide interesting accounts of popular religious practice throughout the empire. Ogasawara's thoughts on Shintō certainly deserves more as well since there are relatively few English language sources relating to him. His more inclusive take on Shintō could contribute to a more textured account of the Japanese state's usage of Shintō.

Furthermore, what ought to be said of Tan'gun himself? Following the occupation, Korea maintained a chronology based on Tan'gun's birth as late as 1961 and Tan'gun's "Descent from Heaven Day" still remains a holiday.<sup>7</sup> However, recently faiths centered on Tan'gun have become much less popular due to Koreans dismissing them as mere myth, financial problems, and lack of any real clergy or organization.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, is there any popular widespread support for the mythic progenitor? Likewise, who truly claims Tan'gun within a divided Korea? In this regard could Tan'gun prove to be instrumental in reuniting his children?

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<sup>6</sup> Nakajima, "Shintō Deities that Crossed the Sea," 41.

<sup>7</sup> Sun, "Legend, Identity, History," 40.

<sup>8</sup> Kim, "Ch'ōndogyo and Other New Religions," 258-259.

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