

## THE ROLE OF MODERN *SHISHI* IDEALS IN SYMPATHETIC JAPANESE APPRAISALS OF AN CHUNGGŪN

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After Itō Hirobumi's assassination by An Chunggŭn, Japanese media tended to urge the Japanese government to adopt coercive policies toward Korea, under which Japan suppressed "Korean riots" and finally annexed Korea. However, there were also some Japanese intellectuals who viewed An's action sympathetically. They shared the Confucian ideal of *shishi* (gentleman activist), a universal ethico-political model in pre-modern East Asia. This article will attempt to analyze the logic of these Japanese who endeavored to understand An's action from the vantage point of Korea's subalterns. An Chunggŭn's self-legitimization of his act, based as well on pan-regional Confucian ethics, was appropriated by his Japanese sympathizers as a sort of *shishi* consciousness, sometimes undistinguishable from the "*bushidō* (Way of the warrior) spirit". The appropriations happened differently in diverse milieus, including socialist and Christian circles. Most of them limited themselves to sympathizing with An's sacrifice for the sake of his country's independence, without an attempt to criticize imperialist discourses. Although remaining a tiny minority, Baba Kochō (a progressive author and translator, 1869–1940), Kōtoku Shūsui (a socialist activist, 1871–1911) and Kashiwagi Gien (a Christian activist, 1860–1938) criticized Japan's imperialist turn and its violations of Korea's sovereignty which eventually precipitated the assassination attempts against Japanese officials. Kōtoku even went further offering a revolutionary strategy of anarchist communism and anti-imperialism aimed at building class solidarity between Asian peoples. While Kashiwagi did not renounce nationalism per se, he was in a position to relativize it based on the universal truth of Christianity. This article aims at grasping the meanings and historical significance of the expressions of sympathetic understanding towards An's act in Japan.

Keywords: An Chunggŭn, *shishi*, *bushidō*, anti-imperialism, socialism, Christianity

Officially, the Japanese government still regards the 1909 assassination of Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), the Taehan Empire's first Japanese resident-general, by a

Korean, An Chunggŭn (1879–1910) on the platform of Harbin Station as a terrorist act. This implies that An Chunggŭn is still branded a “terrorist.” In January 2014, on the occasion of the official opening of the An Chunggŭn Memorial Hall inside the Harbin Railway Station in China, Japan’s chief cabinet secretary Suga Yoshihide emphasized in his response to the journalists during a press briefing in Tokyo that Japan views An Chunggŭn as “a terrorist who received the death sentence for murdering our first Prime Minister.” He continued by criticizing two of Japan’s neighbors: “The coordinated move by China and South Korea based on a one-sided view [of history] is not conducive to building peace and stability.”<sup>1</sup> It is clear that Suga expressed discontent both towards Koreans who had continuously regarded An Chunggŭn as a symbol of anti-colonial resistance, and towards Chinese who broadly shared this assessment with a view to strengthening Sino-Korean anti-Japanese solidarity.

However, it also looked as if Suga was not fully aware of the inherent one-sidedness of his own position. When the violent acts that often accompany popular resistance against external aggression or predatory authorities are defined as terrorism, there comes the danger of implicitly legitimizing the huge and overwhelming violence of colonial rule and the imperial impingements on smaller lands’ sovereignty. On the other hand, if—in the manner it is done in South Korea or China—An Chunggŭn is lionized as the foremost symbol of the anti-Japanese struggle, then there is a danger of promoting the individual violence of assassination, rather than encouraging a popular movement from below, as the main tool of resistance movements.

The difference in opinion over Itō’s assassination between the former colony, Korea, and the former colonial metropolis, Japan, is also clear in the way Itō is assessed in both places. In Korea since An Chunggŭn’s times Itō used to be seen as the main architect of the Japanese colonization of the country.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, the Japanese media of the era tended to depict Itō as “a model of the civilized politician,”<sup>3</sup> and he was also alleged to be the leader of the group arguing for civilian government for Korea (the *bunchi* faction) out of sympathy with Koreans. The Japanese media, demanding revenge for An’s assassination of Itō, urged the Japanese government and the resident-general of Korea to harshly suppress the

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<sup>1</sup> “Japan Protest over Korean Assassin Ahn Jung-geun Memorial in China,” BBC News, January 20, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25808437> (accessed May 28, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Franklin Rausch. “Visions of Violence, Dreams of Peace: Religion, Race, and Nation in An Chunggŭn’s *A Treatise on Peace in the East*,” *Acta Koreana* 15, no. 2 (2012): 263–291.

<sup>3</sup> Kichitarō Ikebe, “Tōkō no shi ni yorite shōzubeki genrō seidō no henka ikan” [What kind of changes may the death of Prince Ito cause in the Genro system?], *Jitsugyō no sekai* 6, no. 13 (1909): 12.

“Korean riots” (anti-Japanese guerilla movements) and finally annex Korea.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, following Itō’s assassination, Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922) and Terauchi Masatake (1852–1919), the two leaders of the group favoring a military government for Korea (the *budan* faction), proceeded further with preparations for the forcible annexation of Korea. Finally, Korea was incorporated into the Empire of Japan on August 29, 1910.

Recent Japanese studies on the history of Korea’s annexation often tend to excessively emphasize the conflict between the *budan* and *bunchi* factions. The latter is often described as being composed of relatively more lenient imperialists who supposedly even attempted to carry out the policies of home rule promotion in Korea.<sup>5</sup> According to these historical narratives, An’s assassination of Itō signified the emergence of ultra-radical Korean nationalism. Eventually, following this line of reasoning, the Korean nationalist militancy ended up accelerating the forcible annexation of Korea and preparing the ground for the colonialist military government. Thus, as these studies argue, the assassination blocked the realization of Itō’s hypothetical vision of turning Korea into a home-rule colony.<sup>6</sup> However, as Ogawara Hiroyuki rightfully argued in his critical review, Itō undeniably was a Korea annexation supporter first and foremost. Moreover, the differences between Itō and the other Japanese policymakers concerned tactics more than principles, and the praise for Itō’s supposed benevolence is a way of overlooking the independent agency of the colonized.<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly, overcoming the conflicting history interpretations in the former colony and its colonial metropolis and arriving at a more universalist understanding of history will help to build the “peace and stability” in the region which Suga Yoshihide mentioned in his comments. One way to achieve this aim is to understand the socio-political background for the acts of assassination, rather than to simply limit ourselves to condemning these acts as “terrorism”. After all, the only way to prevent such excesses from happening in the future is to understand and remove the underlying reasons for them. Aiming at bridging the gap in historical perceptions between Korea and Japan as its ultimate objective, this article will attempt to analyze the logic of these few Japanese contemporaries

<sup>4</sup> Yi Kyusu, “An Chunggŭn ũgŏ e taehan Ilbon ōllon’gye ũi insik” [The Japanese media views on the patriotic deed of An Chunggŭn], *Han’guk tongnip undongsa yŏn’gu* 34 (2009): 93–121.

<sup>5</sup> Hiroyuki Ogawara, *Itō Hirobumi no Kankoku heigō kōsō to Chōsen shakai: Ōkenron no sōkoku* [Itō Hirobumi’s vision of the annexation of Korea and Korean society: The mutual competition between royal rights theories] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010), 11.

<sup>6</sup> For example, the following critical biography was published to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Itō’s death. Yukio Itō, *Itō Hirobumi: Kindai Nihon wo tsukutta otoko* [Itō Hirobumi: A man who modernized Japan] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2009), 577–580.

<sup>7</sup> Ogawara, *Ito Hirobumi no Kankoku heigō kōsō to Chōsen shakai*, 6–11.

who, while viewing An Chunggŭn's action critically, did not limit themselves to a simple denunciation of the assassination. Instead, they endeavored to understand the events from a vantage point of colonized Korea's underprivileged populace. These endeavors, however, failed to receive the attention they deserved from the public of the day and were largely overshadowed by the Japanese governmental denunciations of An Chunggŭn's action, dutifully echoed by much of the mainstream press. An attempt at analysis of the era's media discourses on An Chunggŭn and his actions is therefore needed first in order to contextualize the minority's dissenting opinions silenced by the mainstream voices. Such an analysis will help to reconstruct the multi-vocal landscape of the contemporary public opinion in Japan in a more graphic, detailed way. Although some of the existing research has dealt with the non-mainstream views on An Chunggŭn, it has tended to be limited to the study of certain individual examples, without contextualizing them inside the discursive frameworks of the period in question.<sup>8</sup>

By highlighting the pro-An Chunggŭn arguments and their ideological backgrounds, their analyses of the reasons for the assassination of Itō and their suggestions for the alternatives to the colonization policies, we can draw a more polyphonic, authentic and nuanced picture of Japanese society's reactions to the dramatic events in Harbin. This article will particularly focus on An's personal acquaintances among the Japanese (such as prison guard Chiba Tōshichi or An's defense attorney Mizuno) as well as certain socialists and Christians who were sympathetic towards An Chunggŭn's motives for the act of assassination or supported An Chunggŭn from anti-militarist and anti-imperialist standpoints.

All of them shared the Confucianism-grounded ideal of *shishi* (Kor. *chisa*)—that is, a “man of will” (otherwise translated as “determined scholar”) or gentleman activist. The term originates from the Confucian *Analects* (XV.8):

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Yasuo Nakano, *An Chunggŭn: Nikkan kankei no genzō* [The original image of Japanese-Korean relations] (Tokyo: Aki Shobō, 1991); Taigen Saitō, *Waga kokoro no An Chunggŭn: Chiba tōshichi gasshō no shōgai* [An Chunggŭn in my heart: Chiba Tōshichi worshipping [An] throughout his life] (Tokyo: Gogatsu Shobō, 1994); Isao Ikeda, “Ishikawa Takuboku ni okeru Chōsen” [Korea in Ishikawa Takuboku], *Bungei Kenkyū* 67 (1992): 119–144; Morifumi Kuroki, “An Chunggŭn to Kōtoku Shūsui: Nihon seifu ni yori tachikirareta Nihon, Chōsen, Chūgoku no tōhoku Ajia heiwa eno michi” [An Chunggŭn and Kōtoku Shūsui: The way to Northeast Asian peace between Japan, Korea and China cut off by the Japanese government], *Kyūshū rekishi kagaku* 39 (2011): 65–70; Kŭm Pyōngdong, “Kashiwagi Gien: An Chunggŭn wo tōshite Chōsenkan wo ippen” [Kashiwagi Gien, whose views on Korea were altered by An Chunggŭn], in *Nihonjin no Chōsenkan: Sono hikari to kage* [The Japanese view on Korea: Its light and shades] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2006) 226–231.

The Master said, “The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete.”<sup>9</sup>

The tradition of glorifying political martyrdom was continued by Mencius (372–289 BC) who famously stated:

(...) I like life, and I also like righteousness. If I cannot keep the two together, I will let life go, and choose righteousness. I like life indeed, but there is that which I like more than life, and therefore, I will not seek to possess it by any improper ways. I dislike death indeed, but there is that which I dislike more than death, and therefore there are occasions when I will not avoid danger. (VIA, 10)<sup>10</sup>

Approved by Zhu Xi (1130–1200) and other Neo-Confucian classics, the vision of a determined “man of will” who does not shun away from self-sacrifice in the name of the higher ethical ideals became a part of the scholarly discourse of Tokugawa-period intellectuals<sup>11</sup> and underpinned the behavioral codes of the Bakumatsu loyalist activists.<sup>12</sup> Fiercely nationalistic, these activists at the same time regarded their ethical codes as universal; they often expressed their determination in poems in classical Chinese and referred to famous political martyrs of Chinese history (especially Wen Tianxiang, 1236–1283) as the archetypical “men of will”.<sup>13</sup> Their view of *shishi* ideas as a universal ethical model made it possible for them to admire An Chunggūn’s daring act as a feat of self-sacrificial loyalty.

At the same time, some of An’s sympathizers in Japan also domesticated newly introduced Western ideas, such as socialism or Christianity. Moreover, as this article will emphasize, some of the socialists and Christians among them went even further, articulating anti-militarist and anti-imperialist ideas. Their reactions, as I will attempt to demonstrate, were far from being simply projections of contemporary (mis)perceptions. Inasmuch as they implied the rejection of the *modus operandi* of the imperialist age, they also contained potential for transnational

<sup>9</sup> James Legge, trans. *Analects of Confucius* (London: Pantianos Classics, 2016 [1861]) 56–57.

<sup>10</sup> Legge, James, trans. *The Works of Mencius* (Seattle: Madison Park, 2010 [1895]) 100–101.

<sup>11</sup> John Allen Tucker, “Two Mencian Political Notions in Tokugawa Japan,” *Philosophy East and West* 47, no. 2 (1997): 233–253.

<sup>12</sup> Regarding the *shishi* ideal in Bakumatsu and early Meiji Japan and its Confucian underpinnings, see Marius Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryoma and the Meiji Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 95–104.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Fraleigh, “Songs of the Righteous Spirit: ‘Men of High Purpose’ and Their Chinese Poetry in Modern Japan” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 69, no.1 (2009): 109–171.

solidarity in the future. The sympathy towards the victims of colonialism which they have exhibited is important even now as one possible starting point for bringing Korea and Japan closer to each other.

### AMBIVALENT JAPANESE MEDIA

Immediately after the assassination, Japanese media depicted the assassin, An Chunggŭn, in a unilaterally negative light. He was referred to as a “mad dog of anti-Japanism”<sup>14</sup> who supposedly misunderstood Itō Hirobumi’s conciliatory policy towards Korea. As the trial progressed, however, the media began to express more ambivalent viewpoints.<sup>15</sup> The newspapers’ representation of An fluctuated considerably between the image of a cold-blooded murderer and that of a dignified political prisoner. This article will analyze the process through which these representations were formed, and its underlying logic, focusing on the Osaka newspaper *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* (abbreviated below as *Mainichi*),<sup>16</sup> one of the national daily papers that reported most, and in a timely fashion, on the assassination case.

Similar to other Japanese newspapers, articles in the *Mainichi* consistently referred to An as a “terrorist” (*kyōkan*), “rogue” (*kyōto*) or “assassin” (*shikyaku*), characterizing the assassination of Itō Hirobumi as an “act of terror” (*kyōkō*). In the contemporaneous parlance, “terrorist” (*kyōkan*) was the direct antonym of an “(idealist) activist” (*shishi*), and “act of terror” (*kyōkō*) functioned as the antonym for “righteous deed” (*gikeyō*). From the beginning, *Mainichi* blamed the alleged terror on the “anti-Japanese group consisting of blood-thirsty and conspiring Koreans” (Oct 27, 1909), and the assassin was reported to have confessed that the motive for the deed was to “exact revenge on Prince Itō, who caused the death of many Koreans” (Oct 27, 1909). Also, quoting from the foreign papers, *Mainichi* reported that “this act of terror angered the Japanese people enough to have them approve of taking more repressive measures towards maintaining the security and order of Korea” (Oct 28, 1909). It was also reported that since Prince Itō, “a personification of peaceful civilization in Japan,” met such a

<sup>14</sup> “Itō Hirobumi,” *Chōsen* 3, no. 8 (1909): 43.

<sup>15</sup> Chizuko Naitō, *Teikoku to ansatsu: Jienda kara miru kindai Nihon no media hensei* [Empire and assassination: Modern Japan’s media organizations from the perspective of gender] (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2005), 253.

<sup>16</sup> See Hyosuk Kang, trans., *Ilbon sinmun An Chunggŭn ūigō kisajip, vol. 2: Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* [Japanese newspaper article collection on patriotic deed of An Chunggŭn, vol. 2: *The Osaka Daily News*] (Seoul: Tongnip Kinyōmgwan Han’guk Tongnip Undongsa Yōn’guso, 2011). Unless indicated, all article translations are mine.

calamity, “Japan will be more inclined to an aggressive invasion policy from now on.” *Mainichi* was preparing to use the alleged terror as a pretext for Japan’s coercive annexation of Korea.

On the other hand, on the subject of Itō, who died shortly after the shooting, *Mainichi* wrote that the prince “shouldered the mission of peace in East Asia,” adding that he “always said that he, as an [old] man whose days are numbered in any case, would welcome being assassinated for the nation” (Oct 27, 1909). It was also reported that “he was very quiet and showed no sign of anxiety” even on his deathbed (Oct 28, 1909). Itō was thus painted as a *shishi*, a noble gentleman who was prepared to sacrifice himself for the nation from the beginning.

Meanwhile, both An Chunggūn and the anti-Japanese groupings that were accused of having been behind the incident were roundly condemned. Criticizing the reporting style of the Korean papers, *Mainichi* wrote that though the Korean ruling class, including the imperial family, expressed their regrets, “anti-Japanese newspapers such as *Taehan Maeil Sinbo* did not write a word of sympathy, in an attitude of cold cynicism” (Oct 29, 1909), and that “this newspaper hoisted the Korean flag in its office and congratulated themselves on the occasion of the incident with a banquet” (Oct 28, 1909).

*Mainichi* urged Japan to take especially stringent precautions against the “anti-Japanese groupings” from the assassin’s homeland, Korea’s Northwest (Oct 29, 1909). It also wrote that, instigated by the “unenlightened people of the lower class, such as the present criminal,” the mood of rebellion was gradually on the rise in various regions. On November 3, it was conveyed to the newspapers that the culprit’s name was An, and that he, “taking on the murderous mission, made a pledge to conduct the assassination by cutting off the last joint of his ring finger.” After this, An’s severed finger came to represent the assassination conspiracy. It was reported that “An, twenty-two to twenty-three years old, is a short man whose face is dark, full of vigor and fierceness, with smallpox marks” (Nov 4, 1909). *Mainichi* was the first paper to release An’s picture with his ring finger cut off (Nov 28, 1909. Figure 1).



指名無の根重安演兇

Figure 1: An Chunggūn's picture published in *Mainichi* on November 28 with the caption "the ring finger of the terrorist An Chunggūn."



Figure 2: A postcard issued in contemporary Japan, assumed to be adapted from the original of the picture in figure 1. 14.2x 9cm. Owned by Pak Samjung.

The tone of the reporting began to change with the step-by-step release of An's interrogation transcripts, after his transfer to the Lüshun prison. The change in the mode of reporting became especially noticeable from the middle of November on, after the press release concerning An's statement on the fifteen reasons he assassinated Itō. In the version presented by *Mainichi* (Nov 29, 1909),<sup>17</sup> An claimed the deed was done as retaliation for the following alleged actions by Itō:

1. Assassinating the Korean empress
2. Forcing the unequal treaty of five articles [the so-called "Protectorate Treaty" of 1905] on Korea
3. Forcing the unequal treaty of seven articles [the Korean-Japanese Treaty of 1907] on Korea
4. Dethroning the Korean emperor
5. Disbanding the Korean armed forces
6. Massacring innocent Korean civilians
7. Depriving Korea of its national rights
8. Confiscating and burning Korean textbooks
9. Banning Koreans from subscribing to newspapers
10. Issuing Japanese bank notes in Korea
11. Raising government bonds amounting to thirty-three million yen
12. Disturbing the peace in East Asia
13. "Protection measures" vis-à-vis Korea unworthy of their name
14. Assassinating the previous Japanese emperor, Kōmei [r. 1831–1867]
15. Deceiving Korea and the world

<sup>17</sup> The various Japanese newspapers quoted the fifteen reasons more or less identically, albeit with minor variations in wording and numbering. The statement was reported as early as the November 18 issue of *Tōkyō Asahi Shimbun* and the November 19 issue of *Yorozu Chōbō*.



This is in fact a summary of the interrogation transcript. An did not include reasons 9, 11 and 13 in his autobiography, *An Ŭngch'il yŏksa* (The history of An Ŭngch'il).<sup>18</sup> Instead of reason 13, it accuses Itō of having “spread a false rumor around the world that Koreans wanted Japanese protection.” *Mainichi*'s version of reason 13 distorts An's original argument, which denies the legitimacy of the “Protectorate Treaty” itself. *Mainichi* misrepresents An's statement as a criticism of deficiencies in the so-called Protectorate Treaty concerning methods and implementation procedures. Nevertheless, *Mainichi*'s version of An's fifteen reasons still suggest that An assassinated Itō not for personal motives or revenge, but out of ardent patriotic sentiments (reasons 1–11). Reason 14 points out that Itō is a traitor who murdered Emperor Kōmei (the father of the then-reigning Japanese emperor Meiji). While there is hardly any evidence to support such an allegation,<sup>19</sup> An's statement that he was to revenge also the murder of a Japanese emperor was to reveal to the Japanese public that An's action was not simply based on the vision of Japan as an “enemy.” Reason 12 implies that his ultimate goal was to secure peace in East Asia, giving a glimpse into the essentials of An's political philosophy, which culminates in his essay *Tongyang p'yŏngbwaron* (On peace in East Asia).

It was also reported that An said that “since I have saved Korea from crisis and laid the foundation for the cause of Korea's liberation, I am relieved and happy even if I die” (Nov 17, 1901), and that while all the other “imprisoned terrorists” missed their families, “An alone, saying that a true patriot does not think of his wife or children, refused to open his mouth concerning his relations or accomplices, stating that [the assassination] was his own idea” (Dec 1, 1909). Such reports depicted An not as a mere atrocious killer but rather a selfless patriot. *Mainichi*'s article reported that An was also a devout, regularly praying Catholic teetotaler (Dec 1, 1909), adding to the credibility of An's testimony on his motives.

While the newspapers' stance towards An fluctuated, Itō's image as a patriot began to crack as well. In its in-depth article on the assassination incident, *Mainichi* wrote that Itō, when inspecting Manchuria, was a “traveler who acted as he pleased,” rebuking his opponents without second thought and drooling on the geishas, and that “he was so unbelievably weak towards women that he made them forget their place, thus aggravating the evils of womanizing” (Nov 1, 1909).

In December, it became clear that An was to be executed. The attack on the pro-Japanese Korean Prime Minister, Yi Wanyong, by Yi Chaemyŏng on

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<sup>18</sup> Chaemun Hwang, *An Chunggŭn p'yŏngjŏn* [A critical biography of An Chunggŭn] (Seoul: Han'gyŏre ch'ulp'an, 2011), 305–306.

<sup>19</sup> On the circumstances around Kōmei's death, see Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryoma and the Meiji Restoration*, 282.

December 22 reinforced the pro-annexation mood in the Japanese media dealing with Korea. *Mainichi* also urged for the annexation of Korea (Jan 1, 1910), but its ambivalent stance towards An still persisted. On December 23, *Mainichi*'s article reported on the visit to An by his two brothers, writing that he "did not complain at all." There is also an article reporting on the composure of An's mother when she heard of her son after being summoned to the government office. The article compliments her indirectly, writing, "Like mother, like son! Though it might sound strange, some people have been filled with admiration" (Dec 29, 1909).

This tendency continued to manifest itself after the trial began on February 7, with the prosecution alleging that:

An claims that he murdered Prince Itō for political goals, but in reality his motive is solely revenge, coming from the grudge he holds against Prince Itō for executing his friends. They were conspiring to commit violence against Prince Itō for what they hold to be Ito's insults against Korean people committed while Itō was serving as the resident-general of Korea. It is obvious that he is not a political prisoner but a run-of-the-mill killer. (Feb 11, 1910)

In answer to this accusation, Mizuno Kichitarō (1874–1947), a practicing lawyer in Dalian at the time who took An's case, defended his client, saying that

the present state of Korea is like to that of Japan prior to the Meiji Restoration, where the slogan "revere the emperor, expel the barbarians" won popular support. Though it might be true that An murdered Prince Itō and committed a dire crime due to his misunderstanding of the Japan-Korea Protection Treaty, there are points on which he deserves sympathy when it comes to his feelings. (Feb 13, 1910)

This defense strategy, emphasizing the similarities between An and Japan's patriotic militants of the last Tokugawa years, clearly sought to elicit the sympathy of the Japanese, who idolized the latter as the pioneers of the Meiji nation-building. *Mainichi* also reported that An, in his final testimony, stressed peace and fraternity between the two nations, saying that

I did not kill Prince Itō out of any misunderstanding, but because Japanese policy towards Korea could not change without his death. Though he is described as a hero, he is a villainous hero. Since the emperor of Japan is a brilliant and virtuous king, he would be joyous when he hears of me doing away with Prince Itō. I have killed him. Hereafter, I have no other desire left except that I hope for the friendship between our two nations and

everlasting peace in East Asia, and pray for the liberation of Korea. (Feb 13, 1910)

*Mainichi* also reported in detail the scene of execution. According to the newspaper, An's last words before he mounted the scaffold were "I come here for peace in East Asia; I hold no grudges, but hope that Japanese officers present here will hereafter do their utmost for the Korea-Japan friendship and the East Asian peace." Then he is reported to have desired "to shout hurrah for the peace in East Asia on the scaffold," and prayed for three minutes before mounting the scaffold (Mar 27, 1910). The stance of this article clearly contradicts that of another article on the same page that denounces the mass performed for An by a French missionary in the French chapel in Harbin at the time of the execution (Mar 27, 1910).

In general, those who were positive about the Japanese colonial rule of Korea would also denounce the assassination of Itō by An, and those who expressed admiration for the deed of An would criticize or denounce the colonial rule of Korea. However, *Mainichi*, while generally criticizing the assassination, arguing for precautionary measures against the Korean anti-Japanese groups and demanding a more coercive policy towards Korea, also printed news articles sympathetic towards An's patriotism. Some of the articles also made clear that An wanted both Korea's independence and maintenance of peace and friendship between Japan and Korea. How should this self-contradictory attitude—criticism of the assassin combined with certain sympathy to his character and attitudes—be interpreted? Below, this article will attempt to solve this conundrum by reviewing the stance of a group of people—the few who supported or showed admiration for An—concerning the state-level violence of the Japanese colonial rule.

## WAYS OF APPROPRIATING *SHISHI* IDEALS

### 1. *Bushidō*

Best known among those who showed esteem for An are the Japanese who dealt with him face to face during the trial and who became impressed by him. One of the most well-known cases would be Chiba Tōshichi, a paramilitary police officer who acted as An's prison guard in Lüshun for five months until the execution. Later, he transferred to a police officer position at the Korean Government General, and, in 1921, retired as an assistant police inspector. After returning to Miyagi Prefecture, where he was from, he is said to have set An's memorial tablet

on his household altar and prayed for An during the rest of his life; he also treasured An's classical Chinese calligraphic inscription "the duty of a soldier is to devote oneself to the nation," given to him as a keepsake.<sup>20</sup> The reasons behind Chiba's actions—which he seemingly never explicitly mentioned himself in writing in his lifetime—are well articulated in the epitaph erected in Dairinji temple, where Chiba's memorial tablet rests. The so-called Epitaph for the Glorification of Patriots An and Mr. Chiba was erected in 1981 to honor the friendship between the two. This epitaph records how Chiba harbored admiration for the "national hero and savior An, chief-of-staff lieutenant general of the Korean Righteous Army, who lamented the decline of his nation and raised an army for the cause of justice." Chiba was moved by the "personal integrity of An, who, concerned for the fate of the nation, dedicated himself to the cause of national independence and honor." An, too, saw himself as a soldier of the Korean Empire, as can be seen in his final testimony, where he stated that "since I did not do it as a private individual but as a soldier fighting for the cause of justice, I believe myself to be a prisoner of war here; if you are to dispose of me, I believe, you should do so according to international law."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, there certainly existed some sympathy between the two, coming from a shared military spirit and patriotic dedication. The contradiction arising from the conflict between Korean and Japanese nationalism had been overcome by Chiba's personal mourning after An's death.

Attorney Mizuno, who took An's case as a court-appointed attorney would be yet another example of those Japanese who admired An. The fact that his spirit resonated with An can be seen in his argument for An's case. As mentioned earlier, Mizuno argued that

since the present state of Korea is like to that of Japan in the last years of the Tokugawa shogunate, his case should be put in the category of such crimes as the [loyalist samurais'] murder of the Tokugawa shogun's Tairō Ii Naosuke [1815–1860], the assault on the Russian crown prince [in Ōtsu in 1891] or the murder [in the midst of a corruption scandal] of the member of the House of Representatives [Shūgiin] Hoshi Tōru [1850–1901]. Not only does it come from the sentiment of patriotism but also deserves more sympathy. Considering that the murder victim, Itō Hirobumi, engaged in similar activities as An—such as an arson attempt against the British Legation—in the last years of the Tokugawa shogunate, An should be

<sup>20</sup> Yasuo Nakano, "Nihon ni okeru An Chunggŭn gishikan no hensen" [Changes in the Japanese view of a righteous gentleman, An Chunggŭn], *Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 2 (1994): 143.

<sup>21</sup> Tongnip kinyōmgwan Han'guk tongnip undongsa yōnguso, ed., *An Chunggŭn ūisa charyojip* [Patriot An Chunggŭn sourcebook] (Ch'ōnan: Tongnip Kinyōmgwan, 1999), 179.

sentenced to three years of imprisonment, but not to a more severe punishment.<sup>22</sup>

Mizuno thus read in An's assassination the same sentiment of patriotism that led Japanese activists to sacrifice themselves while assassinating their adversaries. This is also illustrated by the fact that he received a calligraphic inscription in classical Chinese, written by An himself and reading "gentlemen of will and virtue kill themselves in the name of humaneness," as a keepsake from An. This sort of intimate exchange between the two implies that Mizuno's arguments at the trial were more of his personal interpretation of An's motives rather than simply a way to discharge a defense lawyer's duty towards his client.

In Meiji Japan, the Confucianism-inspired ideals of *shishi* fused with the ethical code of *bushidō*, "the way of the warrior." While being rooted in the warrior ethics of valor and defiance of death articulated by certain authors (for example, Yamamoto Tsunetomo, 1659–1719) of the Tokugawa period, the *bushidō* code was systemized, fitted to the needs of a modern nation state and promoted as Japan's "tradition" by modern nationalist intellectuals, notably Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933).<sup>23</sup> During the Meiji era, this ideal became assimilated into the newly conceptualized set of "national virtues."<sup>24</sup> Presumably, the *shishi* spirit as a universal ethical ideal of East Asia—which also has such things as the cult of fearless self-sacrifice in common with *bushidō* while at the same time demonstrating stronger traits of ethical individualism compared to *bushidō*'s absolutization of retainer's loyalty to his sovereign—was a basis for Japanese sympathy towards An. In this connection, Miura Ryokaku, a Buddhist monk of the Sōtō Sect, expressed his concern:

It is a grave error for people of the world to consider either An, who shot Prince Itō, or Yi Chaemyōng, who shot Yi Wanyong, as a gentleman of will and virtue. If these people came to be misunderstood to be such, I cannot but fear and worry about the future of the empire. I can affirm that these two are not gentlemen of will and virtue, but belong to the type of assassin. Assassins do not know of right or wrong, so that they do good if they

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 163–70.

<sup>23</sup> Cameron Hurst III, "Death, Honor, and Loyalty: The *bushidō* Ideal," *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 4 (1990): 511–527.

<sup>24</sup> On *bushidō* as a modern invented tradition and its appropriation by the Meiji Japanese intellectual mainstream and state, see, for example, Mark J. Ravina, "The Apocryphal Suicide of Saigō Takamori: Samurai, 'Seppuku,' and the Politics of Legend," *Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 3 (2010): 691–721. On the Meiji period *bushidō* discourses, see Oleg Benesch, *Inventing the Way of the Samurai: Nationalism, Internationalism, and bushidō in Modern Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 42–150.

come across goodness, and do evil if they come across vice. [. . .] The gentlemen of will and virtue exist in all ages, but it is difficult to come across many. As a people of a *bushidō* nation full of ardent spirit of loyalty, patriotism and self-sacrifice, we should be next to no other nation in this.<sup>25</sup>

The Confucius and Mencius-inspired ideal of *shishi* was the ideological background of those who would interpret assassinations, so frequent in the early Meiji period, as a *bushidō* of loyalty and patriotism. Miura was concerned that the assassin from Korea might also be interpreted in the *bushidō* context as a “gentleman of determination and virtue” by those who share such an East Asian tradition. This is also clear in the court debates, described above, between the prosecution willing to conclude that the motive for assassination was a private grudge, and the defense responding that the assassination was done out of patriotism. Yet very few of the followers of the *shishi* ideals were aware of the contradiction between modern imperialism and nationalism—potentially capable of being appropriated by the victims of imperialist predations—inherent in the “loyalty and patriotism” motto of the time.

Such a lack of awareness can be glimpsed in the writings of modern Japan’s great poet, Ishikawa Takuboku (1886–1912), who put his thoughts into poems and critical works concerning a series of events: from the assassination of Itō to the case of high treason against the Japanese emperor, the annexation of Korea and the execution of Kotoku Shusui. At the time of the annexation of Korea, he criticized the Japanese rule of Korea, reciting a *tanka* (short poem) “deleting the Korean nation from the map with ink, I listen to the autumn winds.” He is also well known in Korea for his sympathy towards An. At the time of the assassination, before An’s fifteen stated reasons became known through media, Takuboku published an early eulogy for Itō in the daily *Iwate Nippō*. Takuboku grieved for the fact that Itō’s “great heart, which continued to beat bravely for the management of new Japan and the peace in East Asia,” was stopped by “an attack by a Korean revolutionary.” Takuboku continues:

The establishment of Germany was owing to the blood-and-iron policy of Bismarck. It truly was. Likewise, the scale of a new Japan is owing to your true heart, Prince. I find profound meaning in your life, the life of a moderate progressivist. This is the reason my sorrow runs deep. Yet I do not wish mourning to spoil the way paved by the man himself. Though the damage is deeper than expected, I do not yet see the reason to truly loath Koreans instead of pitying them. The prince, a man of generosity and

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<sup>25</sup> Ryōkaku Miura, *Zen to bushidō: Ken* [Zen and *bushidō*: The first book] (Yamagata: Odaeikichi, 1915), 47–48.

understanding warmth, would have grieved for the feelings [of the Koreans] as I do now.<sup>26</sup>

Takuboku saw Itō as different from the likes of Katsura Tarō, who planned to repress domestic opposition and propel the annexation of Korea by establishing military rule there. Seeing Itō as a “moderate progressive” and a man of noble character, Takuboku glorified his patriotism and mourned his death. On the other hand, Takuboku also sympathized with the feelings of Koreans who, yearning for the liberation of their motherland, could not help but assassinate Itō, the symbol of the coming annexation of Korea. However, Takuboku was not fully aware of the scale of the conflict between Itō as the de facto architect of Korea’s colonization (and at the same time one of the architects of the “new Japan”) and the “Korean feelings.” Takuboku demonstrated sympathy and pity, but suggested no solutions. In *Kugatsu no Yoru no Fubei* (Complaints on a September Night), which contains the above-cited *tanka*, Takuboku placed the poem side by side with an elegy for Itō: “If somebody shoots me with a gun, I would like to show them dying like Itō.” Ikeda Isao, a scholar of Takuboku, cites the above work and comments that “though it seems strange for us today that the two poems co-exist, it could have been no strange thing to Takuboku at that time.”<sup>27</sup> Takuboku, respectful towards the *shishi* spirit, was able to feel sympathy for An and the doomed Korean nation. However, he could only weakly criticize the imperialist discourse and its Social Darwinist logic. A recent trend in Japan and South Korea, too, is to categorize both Itō and An as *shishi* with a strong willpower and sense of justice.<sup>28</sup> Yet such an interpretation has its limitations as it does not fully account for the nuances and differences in the confrontation between an imperialist invasion and the counter-violence of resistant nationalism. It may also impede the critical understanding of the chain reaction of violence.

## 2. Socialism and Direct Action

However, some of the Japanese heirs to the early Meiji spirit of militant activism were able to support An Chunggŏn’s assassination of Itō while criticizing imperialist aggression per se. The evidence for this may be adduced from the

<sup>26</sup> Takuboku Ishikawa, “Hyakkai Tsūshin 16–17” [Hundred correspondences 16–17], *Iwate Nippō*, October 27–28, 1909.

<sup>27</sup> Ikeda, “Ishikawa Takuboku ni okeru Chōsen,” 140.

<sup>28</sup> For example, Itō, *Itō Hirobumi*. In the musical *Hero* (2009), performed in the same year in Korea, Itō and An are also both lionized as “soldiers who dedicated both their life and their death to their respective motherlands.”

November 10, 1909 commemorative issue of the Japanese general interest magazine *Taiyō*. The issue, published to memorialize Itō posthumously, contained interviews with personages from various sectors of society, of whom only Baba Kochō (1869–1940) showed any sympathy towards Itō’s assassin. He argued as follows:

To make Korea into a Japanese protectorate is to practice a sort of imperialism. Prince Itō must have been murdered by the Koreans, who considered him the chief perpetrator of the imperialist practices. In a word, Prince Itō fell victim on behalf of the imperialist cause. He is a martyred imperialist.<sup>29</sup>

A younger brother of Baba Tatsui (a radical Freedom and People’s Rights activist from Tosa domain, 1850–1888) and himself an ardent critic of imperialism, Kochō thus focused on the imperialist violence perpetrated by Itō and resisted Itō’s lionization by the mainstream media. A sharp critic of the violence by the strong against the weak, Kochō was also arrested for supporting Korean people when a massacre of resident Koreans was triggered by false rumors after the devastation of the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake.<sup>30</sup>

Kochō was deeply interested in socialist ideas and sympathized with Kōtoku Shūsui (1871–1911), a revolutionary from the same hometown famously arrested in 1910—the year of Korea’s annexation—and subsequently executed on *lèse-majesté* charges, that is, for having supposedly planned to assassinate Emperor Meiji. Kōtoku was also well known for supporting An Chunggūn from an anti-imperialist, non-nationalist perspective. Whereas An Chunggūn resisted Japan’s imperialist aggression in Korea, Kōtoku, modern Japan’s archetypical radical, resisted statist nationalism and imperialism inside Japanese society.

As is well known, Kōtoku began his political career as an activist of the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement. Then he strove to defeat the politics of the “domain clique” (Satsuma and Chōshū oligarchs)—especially the political faction of Itō Hirobumi—and realize democratic ideals. As a late-nineteenth-century political journalist, he had his ideological roots in the Confucian *shishi* ideal. However, after becoming more aware of the contradictions between social classes, he wrote *Nijusseiki no kaibutsu teikokushugi* (Imperialism: Monster of the twentieth century) in 1901. In this book, he denounced patriotism and militarism as the principal causes of imperialism and urged a worldwide anti-imperialist

<sup>29</sup> Kochō Baba, “Teikoku no junkyōsha” [The martyr of imperialism], *Taiyō* 15, no. 15 (1909): 225.

<sup>30</sup> Teitō Risai Jidō Kyūenkai, ed., *Kantō taishin taika zenshi* [The complete history of the Great Kantō Earthquake and Great Fire] (Tokyo: Teitō Risai Jidō Kyūenkai, 1924), 315.



revolution in the name of the scientific socialism and universal brotherhood.<sup>31</sup> He initially followed a parliamentary strategy modeled after the German Social Democratic Party. After the Russian revolution of 1905, however, he began advocating for the type of direct action taken by the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party. He came to favor workers' solidarity and general strikes as the means for social revolution.<sup>32</sup>

Still, his revolutionary worldview was underpinned by the *shishi* spirit. He believed in the self-sacrificial actions by a minority of awakened intellectuals on behalf of the passive masses. An heir to the *shishi* consciousness of the Freedom and People's Rights activists, Kōtoku was consequent in his sense of duty to enlighten the masses and bring about social changes for the benefit of the exploited—rather than working together with them.<sup>33</sup> Kōtoku Shūsui was critical of statist nationalism and emphasized that class solidarity among the Asian peoples could help prevent war and establish a peaceful communal society. But he was hardly in a position to fully understand Asian revolutionaries' common focus on national independence: their countries were colonies or stood on the brink of being colonized, while Kōtoku's Japan was emerging as a colonial power.<sup>34</sup>

In July 1907, however, when the Japanese government forced Korea to sign the aforementioned unequal “treaty of seven articles” (otherwise known as “the Third Korean-Japanese Treaty”), thus making Korea its de facto colony, Kōtoku, together with his socialist comrades, adopted a non-imperialist resolution “on the problem of Korea,” urging that its independence be preserved.<sup>35</sup> Also, when the assassination in Harbin took place, *Heiminsha*, the center of the socialist movement, published a postcard—presumably the image in figure 2—to support An Chungūn.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Robert Thomas Tierney, *Monster of the Twentieth Century: Kotoku Shusui and Japan's First Anti-Imperialist Movement* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 206.

<sup>32</sup> Shūsui Kōtoku, “Sekai kakumei undō no chōryū” [The tendencies of the worldwide revolutionary movement], *Hikari* 1, no. 16 (1906): 1; Shūsui Kōtoku, “Yoga shisō no henka” [My change in thought], *Nikkan Heimin Shinbun* 16 (1907): 1

<sup>33</sup> F. G. Notehelfer, *Kotoku Shusui: Portrait of a Japanese Radical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 2–3.

<sup>34</sup> Shō Ishimoda, “Kōtoku Shūsui to Chūgoku: Minzoku to aikokushin no mondai nit suite” [Kōtoku Shūsui and China: On the problem of nation and patriotism], in *Zoku rekishi to minzoku no bakken* [The sequel to the discovery of history and the nation] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1953), 319–354.

<sup>35</sup> This was reported in the July 21, 1907 issue of *Ōsaka Heimin Shinbun*.

<sup>36</sup> The postcard in figure 3 has the caption “The Korean martyr who killed Prince Ito [*sic*] at Harbin. As seen in this picture, the cut-off ring finger of the left hand represents the oath of regicide according to the old custom of the Koreans.” This is an almost literal English translation of the Japanese caption in figure 2. Figure 3 is the one that was re-issued in the United States with

But after the publication of the—immediately prohibited—Japanese postcard, a new one was re-designed, distributed and eventually even re-exported to Japan by the San Francisco branch of the *Heiminsha*.<sup>37</sup> The new version is seen in figure 3, with a classical Chinese poem by Kōtoku added to An Chunggŭn’s picture (fig. 2): “[As he] sacrificed his life for justice, killing himself in the name of humaneness, Mr. An’s action shook both Heaven and Earth.” This poem is similar to the aforementioned calligraphic inscription—“Gentlemen of will and virtue kill themselves in the name of humaneness”—written by An himself in jail for his attorney Mizuno.



Figure 3: An Chunggŭn postcard re-designed by the San Francisco branch of the *Heiminsha*



Figure 4: A copy of the picture in figure 3 published in the March 30, 1910 issue of *Sinhan Minbo*, with the caption “A righteous gentleman [unparalleled] throughout the ages, Prince An Chunggŭn”

Interestingly enough, this card was also reprinted in *Sinhan minbo*, a pro-independence Korean nationalist newspaper published at that time in San Francisco. The newspaper published the obituary entitled “A righteous gentleman, Prince<sup>38</sup> An Chunggŭn” on the front page of the March 30, 1910 issue, right after An’s execution. The postcard with Kōtoku’s poem featured in the middle of it (fig. 4). The postcard is also mentioned by An’s first biographer, Hong Chongp’yo (Hong Ōn, 1880–1951), the editor of the Hawai’i-based Korean newspaper *Sinhan’gukpo*:

a classical Chinese poem by Kōtoku Shūsui added to the image in figure 2.

<sup>37</sup> See the letter sent to a doctor Ōishi Seinosuke by Kōtoku on May 26, 1910, in Shiota Shōbē, ed., *Kōtoku Shūsui no nikki to shokan* [The enlarged definitive edition of the diary and letters of Kōtoku Shūsui] (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1990), 529.

<sup>38</sup> “Prince” here denotes a respected person rather than an actual possessor of this aristocratic title.

[As we] argue for the common good under the silent Heaven, [we are in] no position to deceive our conscience. Sometimes when I listened to the Japanese opinions, I heard that [even] they called Prince An a revolutionary martyr. Especially Kōtoku Shūsui was explicit in lauding An by writing a poem on An's picture: "[As he] sacrificed his life for justice, killing himself in the name of humaneness, Mr. An's action shook both Heaven and Earth." *Rōdō Shinpō*, a Japanese newspaper published in the United States, also condemned Itō Hirobumi, saying that a contemptible bastard, Itō, ended up being murdered by a revolutionary martyr, An. This must be because even the Japanese could not cover up Itō's assorted crimes.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 5: An's picture inserted in *Taedong wūn An Chunggūn chōn*

Hong Chongp'yo's 1911 biography also contains An's picture (fig. 5), assumed to be re-printed from either the image in figures 3 or figure 4.<sup>40</sup> It looks as if Hong also encountered *Rōdō Shinpō* either directly or indirectly, meaning that, in a way, An Chunggūn's action produced the conjuncture under which an anti-imperialist solidarity between U.S.-based Korean nationalists and Japanese socialists became possible: the former supported An, and the latter supported An's admirer, Kōtoku. Kōtoku was in opposition to the assassination-based tactics of Russian "nihilists" (*kyōmutō*) when he still was a follower of the conventional social democratic policies, with their vision of achieving workers' parliamentary majority through elections under the freedoms of the press, assembly and association within the

<sup>39</sup> Hong Chongp'yo, *Taedong wūn An Chunggūn chōn* [The biography of a titan of the Great East, An Chunggūn] (Honolulu: Sinhan'gukposa, 1911), 11.

<sup>40</sup> The Japanese researcher Kuroki Morifumi was the first to clarify the relationship between the images in figures 3 and 4. Kuroki Morifumi, "An Chunggūn to Kōtoku Shūsui: Nihon seifu ni yori tachikirareta Nihon, Chōsen, Chūgoku no tōhoku Ajia heiwa eno michi" [An Chunggūn and Kōtoku Shūsui: The way to Northeast Asian peace between Japan, Korea and China cut off by the Japanese government], *Kyūshū rekishi kagaku* 39 (2011): 69.

limits of the law. But after having become aware that the Japanese government was gradually imitating Russian absolutism in its clampdowns against all dissenters, he came to approve of extra-legal political activity as an instrument for social revolution.

For such an extra-legal activity, with all the accompanying dangers, a self-sacrificial ethos was needed. This form of activism was predicated on the existence of an awakened vanguard minority able and willing to give up their (often comfortable) private lives for the benefit of the exploited. The ethics of such a revolutionary vanguard represented an appropriation of the Confucianism-inspired *shishi* consciousness by socialist revolutionaries. Kōtoku respected An as a practitioner of what one can term “Confucian ethics-based revolutionary ideas” waging a self-sacrificial struggle against the colonizers. He, in a way, recognized An Chunggŭn as a fellow bearer of the noble *shishi* spirit, although, unlike both An and the conservative Japanese *bushidō* advocates, he was staunchly opposed to nationalism of any kind. The *shishi/chisa*<sup>41</sup> spirit—that is, the Confucian idealistic activism in its Japanese and Korean versions—was the starting point not only for Kōtoku’s approval of extra-legal struggle combined with his opposition to militarism, but also for An’s assassination of Itō in his quest for peace in East Asia.

### 3. Christianity

Yet another appropriation of the *shishi* ideal took place among Japanese Christians. The postcard of An Chunggŭn published in San Francisco (fig. 3) explains that the characters adorning the top of the picture are a facsimile of a poem by Kōtoku “praising the brave conduct of the martyr.” This suggests that the Meiji socialists embedded in strong Christian-socialist ethics might have equated An’s assassination (with the subsequent death for the sake of the state, *junkoku*) with religious martyrdom (*junkyō*). It is also possible that the Christians had appropriated and re-contextualized the “patriotic spirit” of the time within their religious ideology. However, this does not mean that the attitude of the majority of Christians was much different from that of the mainstream Japanese media. Nitobe Inazō, the author of *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, referred to Itō as a “great world politician,” suggesting that a Shinto shrine be built in his honor. Nitobe believed that such a shrine could parallel the commemorative monuments of the West.<sup>42</sup> Yet once the Japanese Christians discovered that the “terrorist”

<sup>41</sup> *Chisa* is the Korean pronunciation of the same Chinese characters as *shishi*, both broadly referring to an idealistic, gentlemanly activist.

<sup>42</sup> Nitobe Inazō, “Gojūnen go ni okeru Itō kō no rekishiteki kachi ikan” [What will be the historic

responsible for assassinating Itō was a Christian as well, they fell to the rhetoric of “rationalization and insecurity.”<sup>43</sup> A prominent figure who manifested this typical attitude was Ebina Danjō (1856–1937), who was part of the Nihon Kumiai Kirisuto Kyōkai (Congregational Church), sponsored by the colonial government in its attempt to convert Korea after its annexation. Ebina was an advocate of the Russo-Japanese War. When the Japan-Korea Treaty was forced upon Korea in 1907, he stressed that as long as the “*bushidō* Japanese were committed to national philanthropism and focused on the Christian conversion of Korea,” Japan would overcome its adversities in due time. When An assassinated Itō, Ebina complimented the courage of the man who killed Itō and considered him “superior to those opportunists who have turned to the Japanese for their own interests.” At the same time, however, he equated An with the reactionary anti-Western loyalists of the Japanese past.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, there were Japanese Christians who came to the defense of An as well. After the assassination of Itō, Uemura Masahisa of the Japanese Society of Christians paid a personal visit to An’s lawyer Mizuno at Lüshun. It was through Mizuno that he learned of An’s religious devotion. He also heard about An’s actions in the night before the execution, when Mizuno expressed his hope to An that they might encounter each other again in heaven. “I would very much hope so too,” An responded, “but there is a necessary condition. I believe in Jesus Christ, but I do not know whether you do. If you do not, it is something that I strongly urge you to consider.” Mizuno saw that An perceived death as something akin to a homecoming. Mizuno also recounted that An’s views moved him, atheist as he was, into quitting drinking and becoming a believer. Uemura, at this point, had already learned of the existence of An’s prison autobiography. He heard that it was considered a good source to get a glimpse into his high character and firm religious beliefs. Uemura writes:

There is no question that murder is wrong. But he [An] shouts out, in his best conscience, that he is in a war now. Murder in war is not immoral. And that was indeed his philosophy. A wrong is a wrong. (Those who tolerate the existence of war must tolerate this too, as a moral consequence.) But one cannot deny a certain nobility of his religious belief. [. . .] Those, for instance, who worship the rioters of the Sakuradamon Incident [1860] who

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value of Prince Itō in 50 years], *Jitsugyō no sekai* 6, no. 13 (1909): 16–18.

<sup>43</sup> Kashiwagi Gien, “Itō ko wo koroshita An Chunggūn no shinkō” [The religion of An Chunggūn, who murdered Prince Itō], *Jōmō kyōkai geppō* 142 (1910): 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ebina Danjō, *Ebina Danjō sekkyōshū* [Ebina Danjō’s volume of sermons] (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1973), 296.

killed Prime Minister<sup>45</sup> Ii Naosuke, will not have the right to turn their backs against An.<sup>46</sup>

This is a piercing argument against Ebina's condoning of war and his justification of assassination in the name of historical progress. In truth, however, this writing did not originate directly from Uemura, but from an excerpt printed in the local Christian monthly *Jōmō kyōkai geppō*. The journal was published by Kashiwagi Gien, a graduate of Doshisha University, then in the ministry at the Annaka church of Gunma prefecture. Kashiwagi had strategically placed this excerpt right above another writing entitled "Shishi no Shi to Kyōkan no Shi" (The death of a *shishi* and the death of a terrorist). The latter discusses a Japanese Christian who sabotaged a railway in an attempt to impede Russian troop transportation during the Russo-Japanese War. He was reported to have prayed in his cell and met the execution with dignity. This "death of a patriot" is contrasted with that of a murderous robber who had faltered at his place of execution. The arrangement of the articles clearly betrays an intent to read An's death as precisely the death of a *shishi*, juxtaposing the resolution that An showed the night before his execution with that of the patriotic Japanese Christian.

Kashiwagi Gien, referred to in Korea as "Japan's anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist conscience, critical of Japan's rule in Korea,"<sup>47</sup> had published anti-war excerpts of Tolstoy in almost every issue of the *Jōmō kyōkai geppō* since the Russo-Japanese War. He is also well known for his campaign to free Kōtoku Shūsui after his 1910 arrest.<sup>48</sup> In a text he published soon after An's assassination, Kashiwagi mentions an American missionary who had once told him that Korea would precede Japan in becoming a Christian country. Kashiwagi himself interprets this as a divine bestowal of a religious property upon a country that has lost its corporeal one. Kashiwagi then diagnoses the situation in Japan similarly:

Japan has gained much on Earth in the past decade. It has gained Taiwan. It has gained Karafuto. It has gained Manchuria. And it has practically gained Korea. But it has lost its soul. [. . .]. Its society is collapsing. [. . .] Yet God is greater than man. [. . .]. He raises those who have his blessings, and he will

<sup>45</sup> As is mentioned above, Ii's exact title was Tairō (Great Elder).

<sup>46</sup> Kashiwagi, "Itō ko wo koroshita An Chunggūn no shinkō," 7.

<sup>47</sup> Yukie Okano, "Kashiwagi Gien: Chekukchuūi rūl pūjōnghago Han'guk tongchi rūl pīpanhan Ilbon ūi yangsim" [Japan's anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist conscience, critical of Japan's rule in Korea], trans. Yi Chōnghwan, in Akira Tateno, ed., *Kū ttae kū Ilbonin* [The Japanese of the [colonial] time] (Seoul: Han'gilsa, 2006), 89.

<sup>48</sup> Jirō Inuma, "'Kashiwagi Gien to Chōsen'" [Kashiwagi Gien and Korea], *Kikan Sanzenri* 13 (1978): 36.

save this country in accordance with his Will. He will save both Korea and Japan [. . .].<sup>49</sup>

Kashiwagi challenged the Social Darwinist tenets that had been used to justify imperial colonialism. He believed that once Japan could free itself from its “national vanity and militarism” and believe in the gentle and humble presence of Jesus Christ, both Korea and Japan would find peace. Kashiwagi was in fact a disciple of Ebina and was even baptized by him. But whereas Ebina had a close relationship with the Japanese government and occupied a central position in Japan’s church community, Kashiwagi remained a humble provincial minister, maintaining a critical distance vis-à-vis imperial authorities.<sup>50</sup> He consistently criticized the missionary activities of Ebina’s Nihon Kumiai Kirisuto Kyōkai (Congregational Church) and their role in spearheading Japan’s colonization of Korea. The propagation method of the Congregational Church was to integrate the religious conversion of the Korean population with its social-political assimilation. Kashiwagi was against this movement and prioritized “spiritual reformation” over “national assimilation.” To the Japanese Evangelical Church, Kashiwagi emphasized that “it was for the sake of firmly establishing Korea’s independence that we approved of both the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War” and that “the Japanese religious community should [...] show its sympathy for [Korean] patriots [such as An] and honor their struggle.” He went on to say:

What would Japan do if Korea had the integrity of Wen Tianxiang, Fang Xiaoru or Koxinga?<sup>51</sup> What if Korea had, among its own, a patriot of lofty principles who observed national laws and orders, and who inspired his own people to a higher standard, for Korea to become a self-governed, independent land? Mustn’t a true religionist embrace this as well?<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Kashiwagi Gien, “Chōsenkoku to Nihonkoku: Tōyō heiwa no yume” [Korea and Japan: Dreaming of peace in East Asia], *Seisho no kenkyū* 115 (1909): 44–46.

<sup>50</sup> Emily Anderson, *Christianity and Imperialism in Modern Japan: Empire for God* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Wen Tianxiang was a scholar-general, famed for his loyalty to the Southern Song Dynasty. On his popularity among Bakumatsu and early Meiji’s *shishi*, see Matthew Fraleigh, “Songs of the Righteous Spirit: “Men of High Purpose” and Their Chinese Poetry in Modern Japan.” Fang Xiaoru (1357–1402) was an orthodox scholar-official of the Ming Dynasty, famed for his resistance against the usurpation of the throne by Emperor Yongle. Koxinga (1624–1662) was a Ming Dynasty loyalist who built his own state on Taiwan.

<sup>52</sup> Kashiwagi Gien, “Watase Chōsen kyōka no kyūmu wo yomu” [Reading *The urgent need of Christianizing Korea* by Watase], *Jōmō kyōkai geppō* 186 (1914): 2.

It is difficult to imagine how influential such an argument was to the Japanese Christian audience at that time. The aforementioned Buddhist polemist, Miura Ryōkaku, who considered An Chunggŭn and Yi Chaemyōng assassins rather than patriots, traced their actions to an indoctrination based on religious principles. He wrote that “the believers in American Christianity, such as An or Yi,<sup>53</sup> have launched an assault upon justice and humanism out of their blind belief in a heaven after life. It is our duty to ensure that our youth do not take them for patriotic warriors. [...]”<sup>54</sup> Miura’s strict separation between transnational religious martyrdom and patriotic *bushidō* seems to be triggered by his anxiety that a transborder religious ideology might subvert governmental order. Kashiwagi, for instance, had criticized the Japanese evangelical movement that collaborated in forcing assimilation upon Koreans, arguing for a “trans-racial attitude towards Korea that was based on religious belief, which would eventually serve to unite the two countries.”<sup>55</sup>

## CONCLUSION

After Itō Hirobumi’s assassination by An Chunggŭn, contemporary Japanese media tended to urge the Japanese government to adopt more coercive policies towards Korea. Indeed, Japan brutally suppressed the “Korean riots” (anti-Japanese guerilla resistance) and soon finally annexed Korea. However, there were also some Japanese intellectuals who viewed An Chunggŭn’s actions sympathetically, while maintaining their distance from the mainstream media. They widely shared the ideal of *shishi*, a Confucian ethico-political model of pre-modern East Asia, as their ideological background. An Chunggŭn’s self-legitimization of his act, based as well on the pan-regional Confucian ethics, was appropriated by An Chunggŭn’s Japanese sympathizers as a sort of *shishi* consciousness, sometimes undistinguishable from a “*bushidō* spirit.” The appropriations happened in different ways in different communities, including socialist and Christian ones. Still, most of them limited themselves to sym-pathizing with An’s sacrifice for the sake of his country’s independence, without attempting to

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<sup>53</sup> In reality, as is well known, An was baptized by French, rather than American, Catholic missionaries. On An’s Catholic connection, see: Yun Sōnja, “An Chunggŭn ūgō e taehan Ch’ōnju kyohoe ūi ūisik” [Understanding of the patriotic deed of An Chunggŭn by the Catholic Church], *Han’guk kŭnbyōndaesa yōn’gu* 33 (2005): 50–78.

<sup>54</sup> Miura, *Zen to bushidō*, 48.

<sup>55</sup> Kashiwagi Gien, “Futatabi Chōsen wo mizaru no ki” [The second record of not being able to see anything in Korea], *Jōmō kyōkai geppō* 318 (1925): 2.



criticize the Social Darwinist “survival of the fittest” ideology used by the imperialists of the day to legitimize their actions.<sup>56</sup>

Although remaining a tiny minority, Baba Kochō, Kōtoku Shūsui and Kashiwagi Gien criticized Japan’s imperialist turn and its gross violations of Korean sovereignty, which eventually precipitated the assassination attempts against Japanese officials. Baba and Kōtoku sharply criticized the invasion of Asian countries by Japanese imperialism from the anti-militarist standpoints. Kōtoku, in addition, offered a revolutionary strategy of anarchist communism and anti-imperialism aimed at building class solidarity between Asian peoples. While Kashiwagi did not renounce nationalism, he was in a position to relativize it based on the universal truth of Christianity. He argued that in case of the conflict between allegiance to the country and sympathy for the weak, the latter should be given preference over the former, and generally gave his support to weaker countries.<sup>57</sup> Kashiwagi’s argument corresponds with An Chunggŭn’s vision for peace in East Asia stated in his essay *Tongyang p’yŏnghwaron* (On peace in East Asia), which argues that mutually equal relationships between China, Korea and Japan should be a prerequisite for the restoration of peace in East Asia.

An Chunggŭn’s assassination of Itō is one of the most celebrated historical examples of individual anti-colonial counter-violence. In order to enable us to stop the vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence, a critical stance vis-à-vis the pro-colonialist propagandist stereotypes—which tend to condemn exclusively the counter-violence of the oppressed—is required. Such endeavors have indeed been made, in Japan and elsewhere, since the moment Itō Hirobumi and An Chunggŭn’s hearts stopped beating. A reappraisal of these attempts at even-handedness or even sympathy towards the anti-colonial militant on the part of colonizing country’s citizens will hopefully contribute to a positive development of the Korean-Japanese ties, still greatly inhibited by the legacy of the colonialist prejudices and the lingering collective traumas of the colonized.

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<sup>56</sup> Regarding Darwinism and Social Darwinism in Meiji Japan, see, for example, Julia Adeney Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> Takeshi Ōsaki, “Kashiwagi Gien no Chōsenkan” [Kashiwagi Gien’s view on Korea], *Nijjima gakuen tankidaigaku kijō* 28 (2008): 31–41.

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