

A JAPANESE EGYPT: KOREA AS DEPICTED BY EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITISH NEWSPAPERS

By YOON JONG-PIL

This article investigates what kind of otherness the British projected onto Korea in the 1900s through a close examination of newspaper articles. The point of departure of this work is the idea that Westerners' conception of the Orient in this period was not monolithic but hierarchically structured. What this article attempts is thus to reveal the distinct position Korea occupied within the assumed Orient, a position different from, and assigned particularly in relation to, that of Japan. It will be shown that Korea was perceived by British newspapers as a Japanese Egypt, an image made possible by the imperialist notion of the modern state shared, overtly or otherwise, by both British and Japanese intellectuals and discrimination in the application of the idea of national freedom. While Korea was largely perceived in terms of what were presumably inherent Oriental traits such as inertness, conservativeness, and laziness, the British accorded a distinct sense of otherness to Korea based on their individualized yet hierarchical understanding of the Orient. Therefore, the phrase 'a Japanese Egypt,' coined to describe Korea, represents the marginalized position Korea occupied within the British conception of the Orient.

Keywords: early twentieth-century Korea (Corea), Korea-Japan relations, British newspapers, perceptions of Korea, Orientalism

This article investigates what kind of otherness the British projected onto Korea in the 1900s through a close examination of newspaper articles. The point of departure of this work is the idea that Westerners' conception of the Orient in this period was not monolithic but hierarchically structured. The framework that establishes a set of oppositions between East and West such as rational/irrational, masculine/feminine, active/passive, and progressive/conservative, often attri-

buted to Edward Said¹ and roundly condemned for ignoring diverse forms of Orientalism by his critics,² is too blunt an analytical tool to catch the specific sense of otherness given to Korea within the overall picture of Asia held by Westerners. What this article attempts, therefore, is to reveal the distinct position Korea occupied within the assumed Orient, a position different from, and assigned particularly in relation to, that of Japan.

In December 1897, four Russian naval vessels arrived at Port Arthur and two at the Port of Talienwan, which in the end resulted in Russia's acquiring a twenty-five-year lease of the area in March 1898. The chain of events leading up to the lease agreement "startled" British statesmen³ and made it the object of British Far Eastern policy from that time on "to check the consolidation of Russian control of Manchuria and certainly prevent her expansion southwards."⁴ Furthermore, by late 1898, Russia had come to obtain mining and forestry concessions along the Yalu and Tumen rivers, unnerving not only the British but also the Japanese that were to fight against Russia over Korea later on "with the tacit support of"⁵ the British government. Therefore, Great Britain became arguably the most important Western partner in Japan's struggle for control over the Korean Peninsula in the 1900s and consequently how the British perceived Korea and its current state of affairs mattered significantly to both the Japanese and Koreans of this period.

Korean literature on Western perceptions of Korea in the early twentieth century is quite extensive ranging from Westerners' geographical perceptions of East Asia⁶ to their impressions of Korean seasonal customs.⁷ Especially, Yi

¹ See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1977), 5–6; 109–110; 138–9; 207; 228–9; 241–2; 309.

² Fred Halliday, "Orientalism' and Its Critics," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (1993): 149–50; Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 11; John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 192; O. P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past* (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1988), ix–xi; Sheng-mei Ma, *The Deathly Embrace: Orientalism and Asian American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xii; Daniel M. Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), xii.

³ John Berryman, "British Imperial Defence Strategy and Russia: The Role of the Royal Navy in the Far East, 1878–1898," *International Journal of Naval History* 1 (2002): 8.

⁴ C. J. Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialist: British Foreign Policy 1878–1902* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), 233.

⁵ Ian Nish, "Komura, the British Alliance and the Russo-Japanese War," in *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–05, Vol. II*, ed. John Chapman and Inaba Chiharu (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2007), 27.

⁶ Yi Chinil, "Söyang chirihak kwa Tongyang insik [Western geography and its perception of the East]," *Asia munbwa yön'gu* 26 (2012): 91–120.

⁷ Sö Yöngsu and Chöng Tusik, "Söyangin i pon Hanguk üi sesi p'ungsok [Westerners' perceptions

Sugi's doctoral dissertation that analyzes the images of Korea found in travelogues by Western travelers from that period is one of the most recent, and probably the most comprehensive, that has appeared on the subject.⁸ On the other hand, there are not many studies in English investigating the ways Korea was perceived by early twentieth-century Westerners. One that stands out is David J. Silva's study of Western attitudes toward the Korean language.⁹

With respect to Western news coverage about Korea, Andrew S. Johnson's study on early American perceptions of Korea is worthy of note.¹⁰ Furthermore, there is also a study on British newspapers' descriptions of Korea in the late nineteenth century.¹¹ Being limited geographically to North America and periodically to the late nineteenth century respectively, these studies do not provide a complete picture of how Korea was represented in early twentieth-century Great Britain. This article, by approaching the British discourse of Korea in the 1900s—a critical time period that ended up with Japan annexing Korea—as an epistemic process founded upon a hierarchically demarcated conception of the Orient, tries to shed light on the role that the image of Korea as a Japanese Egypt, which was particularly widely used in the early twentieth century, played in this process.

In the history of British journalism, the early twentieth century was characterized by the “rise of the commercial newspaper.”¹² The Education Act of 1902 that helped establish compulsory education for all social classes and income growth made the British “a more literate nation than ever before” and with “the commercialisation and expansion of the press,” their reading habits were

on seasonal customs of Korea],” *Sabak chi* 46 (2013): 269–293. Literature on this subject is too voluminous to list here. A few recent studies include: An Kyosŏng An, “Sŏn'gyosa P'ŭraengk'ŭ Suk'op'iltŭ ūi yusan [The legacy of a missionary, Dr. Frank W. Schofield],” *Han'guk Kidokkyo wa yŏksa* 3 (2012): 157–184; Pak Iryŏng, “Togirin sŏn'gyosa ka pon 20-segi ch'o Han'guk ūi minsok [The early twentieth century Korean folklore viewed by German missionaries],” *Pigyo minsokhak* 51 (2013): 11–33; Hwang Pyŏngbae, “A Biographical Study of Missionary Henry G. Appenzeller Based on Daniel M. Davies's Six Stages of Founding Methodism in Korea,” *Sŏn'gyo sinhak* 32 (2013): 295–319.

⁸ Yi Sugi, “Kaehanggi sŏyangin yŏhaenggi rŭl t'onghae pon Han'guk kwan [Images of late Chosŏn in Western travelogues],” PhD diss., Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, 2015.

⁹ David J. Silva, “Western Attitudes toward the Korean Language: An Overview of Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Mission Literature,” *Korean Studies* 26 (2002): 270–286.

¹⁰ Andrew S. Johnson, “Early American Perceptions of Korea and Washington's Korea Policy, 1882–1905,” *Korea Journal* 51 (2011): 110–131.

¹¹ Jongpil Yoon and Hyunsook Park, “An Unfamiliar Other within the Uncivilized,” *Korea Journal* 54 (2014): 33–59.

¹² Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper* (London: Routledge, 2010), 125.

dominated by newspapers.¹³ Of the newspapers of this period, *The Times*, founded in 1785 and usually viewed by contemporaries as being right wing, and the *Manchester Guardian* (now *The Guardian*), “a prominent Liberal newspaper”¹⁴ established in Manchester in 1821, were the most “predominant” ones.¹⁵

As might be expected, the volume of British news coverage on Korea at any point during this period more or less corresponded to the scope and intensity of the events that occurred at that point in the country. The Boxer Rebellion in China¹⁶ and Russia’s increasing activities in Korean waters may explain the relatively high number of articles on Korea in 1900 [Fig. 1]. The spikes in news coverage seen between 1904 and 1905 are due to the military confrontation between Russia and Japan in Korea. In 1907, several significant events occurred in Korean history, beginning with Emperor Kojong’s dispatching a secret delegation to the Second Peace Conference at The Hague, followed by his abdication and the disbandment of the Korean army. Although the year of 1910 is marked by the official annexation of Korea by Japan, the volume of news coverage is lower than that of 1900 and only slightly higher than that of 1907, which suggests that the event came to the British as not much of a surprise.

¹³ Mark Clapson, *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2009), 12.

¹⁴ Frank N. Magill, *The 20th Century Go-N: Dictionary of World Biography, Volume 8* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 1708.

¹⁵ Clapson, *Routledge Companion*, 361.

¹⁶ This event affected Koreans in two ways. Firstly, some of the Boxers crossed the frontier and plundered several Korean villages (“Alarm in Korea,” *Sheffield Independent*, July 19, 1900 and “Boxers in Korea,” *Aberdeen Journal*, February 3, 1902). Secondly, British newspapers talked about Japan’s taking control over Korea “as a price of her ‘exertions’ in China” (“No title,” *Western Daily Press*, July 10, 1900).

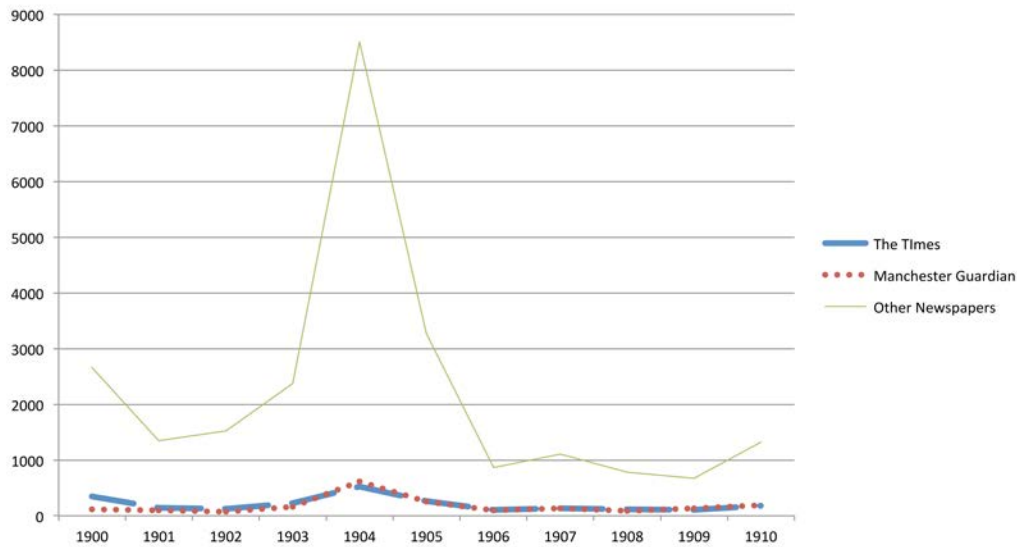


Figure 1: News, editorials, and books reviews mentioning Korea (Corea) 1900–1910¹⁷

KOREA, AN ORIENTAL COUNTRY TO BE MANAGED BY JAPAN AS EGYPT IS BY GREAT BRITAIN

In the early 1900s, British newspapers shared the concerns of the government about Russia’s southward advance in East Asia, which was, in one newspaper’s view, “a direct challenge both to Great Britain and Japan”¹⁸ and consequently observed Korea mainly in this context. Therefore their attention was naturally drawn to Russia’s effort to secure a land concession at Masamp’o, “the finest harbour on the south coast of Korea.”¹⁹ Starting with the *Western Times*’s report on March 28, 1900 that “[a] Russian squadron [had] arrived at Chemulpho [Chemulp’o],”²⁰ a number of newspapers expressed concern about the fact that

¹⁷ The Times Archive, *sub verbo* ‘Corea’ or ‘Korea,’ accessed December 20, 2015, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive>; Guardian and Observer Digital Archive, *sub verbo* ‘Corea’ or ‘Korea,’ accessed December 21, 2015, <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/guardian/advancedsearch.html>; British Newspaper Archive, *sub verbo* ‘Corea’ or ‘Korea,’ accessed December 22, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>. The articles counted here include not only separate articles that took Korea as the main subject but also the ones that mentioned the country, briefly or otherwise.

¹⁸ “The Korean Problem,” *Observer*, May 27, 1900.

¹⁹ “Russia and Japan in Korea,” *Times*, May 18, 1900.

²⁰ “Russia and Corea,” *Western Times*, March 28, 1900.

Alexander Ivanovich Pavloff, Russian minister in Korea, was “pressing upon the Korean Government the Russian Government’s demands.”²¹

The Times’s Tokyo correspondent gave an explanation of the context of the Russo-Japanese conflict over Masamp’o. According to him, the fact that “Russia want[ed] a port in Korean waters” was “axiomatic” because its line of communications between Vladivostok and Port Arthur, without it, “could be cut any moment by Japan.”²² And Japan, on its part, would “of necessity regard the establishment of a Russian naval station in Korea as an event of capital importance,” for “the Korean shoreline [was] within sight of Tsushima.”²³ The *Manchester Guardian* concurred with *The Times*, saying that Russia’s seizure of Masamp’o would “be felt by the Japanese as a grievous blow.”²⁴ The finalization of the agreement between Korea and Russia that granted the latter a site for a coal depot at Masamp’o on March 30, 1900 angered some British newspapers. For instance, the *Manchester Guardian*, reminding the reader of the condition under which the Royal Navy evacuated Port Hamilton in 1887 that no territorial concessions be made by Korea to any other power, lamented that while Russia was doing exactly the opposite of what it had promised with respect to Korea, their government was “looking the other way as hard as it [could].”²⁵

On January 30, 1902, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed with the support of multiple journalists like Edwin Arnold, publisher of the *Daily Telegraph*, and Franklin Brinkley, *The Times*’s Tokyo correspondent,²⁶ and let Britain share “the burden of maintaining the Pax Britannica”²⁷ in the Far East with Japan. As a result, British newspapers watched Korea with a focus on how Japan was to handle the country with respect to Russia’s southward expansion, which is why *The Times* interpreted the alliance between Britain and Japan as showing the two nations’ “full determination to call a halt in the downward progress of Korean [society].”²⁸

²¹ “Russia and Korea,” *Western Times*, March 30, 1900. Also see “Russia and Korea,” *London Standard*, March 29, 1900; “Russia and Korea,” *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, March 30, 1900; “Russia and Korea,” *Nottingham Evening Post*, March 30, 1900; “Russia and Korea,” *Shields Daily Gazette*, March 30, 1900; “Russia and Korea,” *Times*, March 31, 1900; “Russia and Korea,” *Western Times*, March 31, 1900; “Russia and Korea,” *Derby Daily Telegraph*, April 2, 1900; “Russia and Korea,” *Dundee Evening Post*, April 2, 1900.

²² “Russia and Japan in Korea,” *The Times*, May 18, 1900.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ “No title,” *Manchester Guardian*, May 19, 1900.

²⁵ “No title,” *Manchester Guardian*, May 29, 1900.

²⁶ Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1884–1907* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2012), 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁸ “Korea and the Anglo-Japanese Agreement,” *The Times*, April 9, 1902. Similar attitudes are

As seen above, the Russo-Japanese struggle for control of Korea formed the overall context that conditioned the representations of Korea by British newspapers in the early 1900s, which led to a gradual objectification of Korea. Thus, it is no surprise that the thing newspapers in Britain wanted to know about Korea the most was why Japan needed Korea for its own survival, a question to which *The Times* gave the most elaborate answer. According to the newspaper, there were at least four reasons why Japan had to keep Korea under its thumb. Firstly, Korea was “one of Japan’s most hopeful sources for the supply of [food and] raw material.”²⁹ “The proximity of Korea, her fertility, and her comparative sparseness of population,” the newspaper argued, made it “perfectly natural” for Japan to “look upon Korea as her proper ‘sphere of influence.’”³⁰ On August 17, 1900, *The Times*, drawing on an article from the *North American Review*, said that it was a biblical law that talent be used and asked, “What moral right had the American Indians to keep the untold agricultural and mineral wealth of America locked up?”³¹ In its view, the same logic applied to Korea that had been unable properly to exploit its rich land.³²

Secondly, Korea was “Japan’s nearest and best market.”³³ Not only had “much Japanese capital” been “already sunk there,”³⁴ but “[t]he entire ginseng crop, one of the chief exports of Korea,” [was] now in the hands of the Japanese,³⁵ which made “their own commercial supremacy” in Korea “a vital question for them.”³⁶ “Japan’s preponderating commercial, industrial, and other various interests,” thus said the *Western Daily Press*, “necessitate[d] that the whole of Korea should be under the special influence of Japan.”³⁷

The third reason was that the Japanese population was “growing so quickly that there [was] an imperative need for territorial expansion” and Korea was “the natural and inevitable country” for such an expansion because Korea had “a

found in other newspapers: “Korea’s Independence,” *Dundee Evening Post*, July 25, 1902; “The Position in Korea,” *Nottingham Evening Post*, July 25, 1902; “Supporting Korea,” *Western Daily Press*, July 26, 1902.

²⁹ “The Korean Question,” *The Times*, June 5, 1900.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ “The Korean Dilemma,” *The Times*, August 17, 1900.

³² The same view is found in “No title,” *The Times*, March 21, 1901; “No title,” *The Times*, July 14, 1903; “Russia and Japan,” *The Times*, September 5, 1903.

³³ “The Korean Question,” *The Times*, June 5, 1900.

³⁴ “No title,” *The Times*, March 21, 1901.

³⁵ “The Situation in Korea,” *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, July 14, 1901 and “The Situation in Korea,” *The Times*, July 15, 1901.

³⁶ “Russia and Japan,” *The Times*, September 5, 1903.

³⁷ “Integrity of Korea,” *Western Daily Press*, January 5, 1904.

climate and soil like that of Japan” and was “thinly peopled.”³⁸ Simply put, Korea was to be “an outlet”³⁹ or “dumping ground”⁴⁰ for Japan’s surplus population.

Lastly, Korea was of vital strategic importance. “Korea and Japan are as near each other as England and France”⁴¹ and it was, *The Times* maintained, “more than natural that [Japan] should take special interest in that portion of the mainland immediately contiguous to her own shores.”⁴² The newspaper deemed Japan’s belief justified that “a Russian occupation of Korea would constitute a permanent threat”⁴³ and “mean a sentence of perpetual restriction and shrinkage for Japan.”⁴⁴

All this makes sense if one thinks within the frame of mind that a nation “needs room to grow,” territorially or otherwise, and thus the “ultimate extinction of” another nation necessary to its growth is ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable.’⁴⁵ British newspapers, *The Times* in particular, were prone to approach Korea from this standpoint, which was most conspicuously seen in the newspaper’s confident declaration that “every natural law proclaim[ed]”⁴⁶ that Korea be annexed by Japan.⁴⁷ In the end, the belief in “the law of the survival of the fittest,”⁴⁸ coupled with a sort of Malthusian projection, led the British to perceive Japan’s acts of aggression toward Korea as something “forced” upon it by “the necessities of self-preservation.”⁴⁹ Therefore, that British journalists easily bought into the Japanese rationale for their course of action in Korea was not just due to the

³⁸ “Russo-Japanese Rivalry in the Far East,” *The Times*, June 7, 1900.

³⁹ “The Korean Dilemma,” *The Times*, August 17, 1900, “Japan and Russia in the Far East,” *The Times*, September 12, 1900, and “No title,” *The Times*, July 14, 1903.

⁴⁰ “An Aberdonian in Korea,” *Aberdeen Journal*, February 6, 1904.

⁴¹ “The Korean Question,” *The Times*, June 5, 1900.

⁴² “The Korean Dilemma,” *The Times*, August 17, 1900.

⁴³ “No title,” *The Times*, March 21, 1901.

⁴⁴ “Japanese Views,” *The Times*, November 24, 1904. Similar points were made in “No title,” *The Times*, December 22, 1903, “Dominates Korea,” *Hull Daily Mail*, February 8, 1904, “Japanese and Korea,” *Western Daily Press*, February 15, 1904, “The Harbour of Fusan,” *The Times*, April 5, 1904, and “The Conclusion of Peace,” *Aberdeen Journal*, October 17, 1905.

⁴⁵ “The Korean Question,” *The Times*, June 5, 1900.

⁴⁶ “The Harbour of Fusan,” *The Times*, April 5, 1904.

⁴⁷ One notable exception to this tendency was a British journalist named Ernest T. Bethell (1872–1909), co-founder of the *Taehan maeil sinbo* (*The Korea Daily News*). Bethell came to Korea as the war correspondent for the *Daily Chronicle* in 1904 and soon became an ardent critic of Japanese rule in Korea, which eventually resulted in him being expelled from Korea in 1908. For a detailed study of Bethell see Chinsök Chöng, *The Korean Problem in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1904–1910* (Seoul: Nanam Publications, Co., 1987). Also see C. I. Eugene Kim, “A Problem in Japan’s Control of the Press in Korea, 1906–1909,” *Pacific Historical Review* 31 (1962): 393–402.

⁴⁸ “The Korean Question,” *The Times*, June 5, 1900.

⁴⁹ “The Conclusion of Peace,” *Aberdeen Journal*, October 17, 1905.

belief that Britain's "interests in the Far East and Japan's interests in the Far East are identical."⁵⁰ What they shared was more than their strategic and commercial interests in that region. At the center of their worldviews there lay the imperialist notion of "the modern state as dependent on colonial expansion for survival."⁵¹

The imperialist *Weltanschauung* held rather unequivocally by the British correspondents of the time found its expression in the analogy between Korea and Egypt. The motives for the occupation of Egypt by the British in 1882 centered on the Suez Canal. In 1875, the British government purchased almost half the shares of the Suez Canal Company, which gave the government "a direct interest in the economic stability of Egypt."⁵² Furthermore the opening of the Canal marked a new era for Britain in terms of maritime transport because it nearly cut in half the travel time between London and New Delhi. However economically motivated, Britain taking over Egypt was also viewed as morally justified since most of the British administrators involved in Egyptian finances such as Sir Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer (1841–1917) believed that "Egyptians were incapable of self-government."⁵³ And it was this sort of experience in Egypt that British newspapers projected onto what Japan was experiencing in Korea.

Although the expression 'Korea as a Japanese Egypt' appeared in British newspapers before and after the Russo-Japanese War, it was during the war that it gained wide currency. On March 12, 1904, the *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* described "Marquis Ito's position in Korea" as being "akin to that of the British Commissioners in Egypt and South Africa" and welcomed his arrival in Korea "as a guarantee of security and progress."⁵⁴ On March 21, the *Nottingham Evening Post* confidently predicted that Marquis Ito, who "look[ed] at Korea with English eyes," would "administer it as Egypt or the Malay Peninsula [were] administered by the makers of empire."⁵⁵ The newspaper's confidence was well founded given that British advisors including Montague Kirkwood (1850–1926) had been giving Marquis Ito the advice that Japan treat its newly added territories as colonies "legally, politically, culturally, and financially separate from Japan, in the same way that the British colonies of India and Hong Kong were separate from Great Britain."⁵⁶

⁵⁰ *House of Commons Hansard Debates*, February 13, 1902, vol. 102, cc. 1295–1296.

⁵¹ Michelle Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 39.

⁵² P. J. Cain, "Character and Imperialism: The British Financial Administration of Egypt, 1878–1914," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34 (2006): 181.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁵⁴ "The Japanese in Korea," *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, March 12, 1904.

⁵⁵ "The Evening Post," *Nottingham Evening Post*, March 21, 1904.

⁵⁶ Edward I-tse Chen, "The Attempt to Integrate the Empire: Legal Perspectives," in *The Japanese*

The Japanese had their fair share in propagating the image of Korea as a Japanese Egypt in the West. In 1904, the Japanese government dispatched two individuals, namely Kaneko Kentarō (1853–1942) and Suematsu Kenchō (1855–1920), to the United States and Great Britain with “secret orders to engage in public diplomacy”⁵⁷ in their respective areas. Suematsu’s interview with a Reuter’s representative, where he remarked “the status of Korea would be that of a Japanese Egypt,”⁵⁸ was part of the Japanese efforts to “manipulate the British newspapers.”⁵⁹ His mission was successful by any measure. Japan, the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* averred, had “proved herself the equal of” Russia and, being in a ‘grow or die’ situation, wished “to retain Korea in some such relationship as [their] own to Egypt.”⁶⁰ On September 7, 1904, the *Manchester Guardian* painted a rosy picture of what the future would hold for Korea, saying Japanese intervention in Korea would make “the tranquility and prosperity of Egypt” “repeated in Corea” “in the course of a few years.”⁶¹ The frequent usage of the analogy by British newspapers indicates that their representation of Korea tended to amount to its marginalization, that is, its reduction into a problem to be solved for the ‘survival’ of both Britain and Japan.

Of course, this does not mean that concepts like individual liberty and national freedom were unknown to British intellectuals. For example, William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), who served as Primer Minister four separate times between 1868 and 1894 under the conviction that “the equal rights of all nations” be “acknowledge[d],”⁶² supported “liberal and national ideas, especially in Italy, Ireland, Greece, and the Danubian principalities.”⁶³ However, in reality, “his

Colonial Empire, 1895–1945, ed. Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 249.

⁵⁷ Masayoshi Matsumura, *Baron Kaneko and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905)*, trans. Ian Ruxton (Morrisville: Lulu Press, 2009), 18.

⁵⁸ “Japan’s Position after the War,” *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, May 11, 1904; “The War,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, May 11, 1904; “Baron Suyematsu on Japanese Policy,” *The Times*, May 11, 1904; “Japanese Aims,” *Western Daily Press*, May 11, 1904; “Korea after the War,” *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, May 12, 1904; “No title,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, May 14, 1904.

⁵⁹ Matsumura, *Baron Kaneko*, 17.

⁶⁰ “The ‘Yellow Peril’ Again,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, September 5, 1904.

⁶¹ “Our London Correspondence,” *Manchester Guardian*, September 7, 1904.

⁶² William E. Gladstone, “Gladstone’s Third Midlothian Speech,” in *English Historical Documents, 1874–1914*, ed. W. D. Hancock (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1977), 360.

⁶³ Keith Sandiford, “W. E. Gladstone and Liberal-Nationalist Movements,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 13 (1981): 27. As for the relationship between Gladstone and the idea of self-determination, see Derek Heater, *National Self-Determination: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 7–10.

support of national causes was rather ‘selective’” because national freedom was, in his eyes, “never really a natural right,” but something “to be earned, like a badge of merit.”⁶⁴

British journalists, imbued with the discriminatory notion that national freedom belongs only to those who deserve it, displayed a tendency to treat the independence of Korea as an instrument that was to serve, for both Britain and Japan, “as a bulwark against Russia’s southward advance”⁶⁵ rather than a legitimate right. In their eyes, however, the prospects for Korea’s fulfilling the task on its own were less than slim. On September 12, 1900, *The Times* painted a very gloomy picture of Korea:

Under the baleful shadow of Chinese conservatism Korea could never have developed self-helpful capacity. Japan, therefore, thrust China aside, and then endeavoured to educate Korea’s faculties for practical independence. But the attempt has been a signal failure. During the past five years Korea has not made any real advance towards self-governing capacity. Patriotism occupies as low a place as ever in her councils of State; corruption is as rife as ever among her officials; intrigues, prompted by selfish ambitions, continue to paralyse her national energies as effectually as ever.⁶⁶

Not only was this view shared by other newspapers, but it persisted to the end of hostilities between Russia and Japan in September 1905. In January 1904, the *Western Daily Press* regarded Korea as “a country which [was] unable to continue even a tolerable administration when left alone”⁶⁷ and *The Times*, again, said that Korea was not “an efficiently organized State on the approved European pattern.”⁶⁸ The *Dundee Evening Post* told its readers that the “complete rottenness of [Korean] officialdom” made them smile because a census taken by the government showed that it had “a few hundred thousands” “instead of ten million subjects”—a result of the enumerators having left out the names of individuals that paid them “a dollar or two.”⁶⁹ The “corrupt and incapable system of government,” lamented the *Gloucester Journal*, made the “condition of the greater portion of its inhabitants” “most wretched,”⁷⁰ which was in agreement

⁶⁴ Ibid. 28–9.

⁶⁵ “Japan and Russia in the Far East,” *The Times*, September 12, 1900.

⁶⁶ “Japan and Russia in the Far East,” *The Times*, September 12, 1900.

⁶⁷ “Integrity of Korea,” *Western Daily Press*, January 5, 1904.

⁶⁸ “No Title,” *The Times*, January 6, 1904.

⁶⁹ “In Queer Korea,” *Dundee Evening Post*, January 14, 1904.

⁷⁰ “Korea,” *Gloucester Journal*, January 16, 1904.

with the opinion of the *Aberdeen Journal*.⁷¹ In April 1904, *The Times* stated that “corruption, oppression, and perversion of justice” “reigned in every part of the little State”⁷² and, in September, the *Manchester Guardian* expressed its sorrow for the Korean people being “crush[ed]” by the “system of wholesale pillage and extortion.”⁷³

So the verdict was that Korea was “absolutely incapable of reforming herself from within”⁷⁴ and its punishment was the conclusion of the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty on November 17, 1905 that deprived the latter of its diplomatic sovereignty. Frederick A. McKenzie (1869–1931), who was once a contributor to the *Pall Mall Gazette* and served as a correspondent for the *Daily Mail* as well, vehemently pleaded for the Korean people who, in his judgment, had “no spokesman or advocate in England” and condemned the treaty as “indifference to the rights of weaker peoples.”⁷⁵

But McKenzie’s empathetic argument for Korea met with a negative response in the West. For instance, *The Times* pointed out that foreign countries “had shown a readiness to acquiesce in the new situation,” putting on the Japanese the responsibility to “lea[d] Korea tactfully and kindly along the path of progress.”⁷⁶ On November 29, the *Manchester Guardian* stated in a composed tone that “whether Japan [had] obtained her complete control of the foreign policy of Corea” “by means of amiable and affectionate conferences” “or by a brutal employment of superior force” was immaterial for now, because “[i]t [was] too late for Great Britain to protest” against it.⁷⁷ All Britain could demand, it continued, was “the fulfillment of the pledge of ‘equal opportunities for the commerce and industry of all nations.’”⁷⁸

The acquiescent attitude exhibited by British newspapers may be explained by several factors. First of all, after having come out victorious in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan had established itself as “a regional Great Power”⁷⁹ in Northeast Asia, which was indisputably acknowledged by the Western countries. Consequently, no Western country was willing to go against Japan’s will in the region unless their

⁷¹ “An Aberdonian in Korea,” *Aberdeen Journal*, February 6, 1904.

⁷² “Japan and Korea,” *The Times*, April 7, 1904.

⁷³ “The Corean and His Land,” *Manchester Guardian*, September 2, 1904.

⁷⁴ “Korea,” *Gloucester Journal*, January 16, 1904.

⁷⁵ “An Englishman’s Protest,” *Manchester Guardian*, November 29, 1905. McKenzie’s protest was also recorded in “Japanese Perjury,” *Lancashire Evening Post*, November 29, 1905.

⁷⁶ “Japan and Korea,” *The Times*, November 30, 1905.

⁷⁷ “Editorial,” *Manchester Guardian*, November 29, 1905.

⁷⁸ “Editorial,” *Manchester Guardian*, November 29, 1905.

⁷⁹ Keith Neilson, “The War and British Strategic Foreign Policy,” in *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–5*, Vol. I, ed. Rotem Kowner, et al. (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2006), 315.

interests were directly compromised by the recent victor's action. When approached by Homer B. Hulbert (1863–1949), who was sent to the United States as an emissary of the Korean emperor in 1905 to protest against the Japanese takeover of Korea, the U.S. senators responded, “Do you really believe that America ought to go to war with Japan over Korea?”⁸⁰ Moreover, Japan's dominance in that area allowed Britain to “concentrate the Royal Navy in Home waters.”⁸¹ Lastly, one thing that should not be ignored in this regard is how actively and effectively the Japanese ‘special envoys’ to America and Europe such as Kaneko and Suematsu were operating around this time. The former was capitalizing on his personal connections with President Theodore Roosevelt, while the latter was diligently “making speeches and contributing his writings”⁸² in London.

In 1907, public interest in Korea once again soared thanks to the repercussions of Emperor Kojong's dispatching a secret delegation to the Hague Peace Conference in June 1907, namely the abdication of the emperor himself on 20 July, the signing of a new treaty between Korea and Japan on July 24 by which the latter “achieved a de facto annexation”⁸³ of the former, and the disbandment of the Korean army in August. British newspapers allowed the members of the delegation some space to make their case. For example, the *Dundee Courier* reproduced a portion of the interview one of its members gave:

Japan has tried to ruin us and to poison the minds of our people, but we will never listen to Japan's advice, for we have never believed in that country, and we cannot do so now. There is not a single Korean who would willingly give up his independence and our people will shed the last drop of their blood for independence and freedom.⁸⁴

However, the newspaper deemed it “hardly possible” “to accept [the charges against Japan] as presenting a true picture of the situation,” for, firstly, Koreans, “whether left to themselves or placed under the influence of either China, Russia, or Japan,” had “never found happiness;” secondly, they had “inherited from

⁸⁰ Daniel A. Métraux, “Frederick Arthur McKenzie on the Japanese Seizure of Korea,” *Southeast Review of Asian Studies* 36 (2014): 137.

⁸¹ Neilson, “The War,” 316.

⁸² Matsumura, *Baron Kaneko*, 114.

⁸³ Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 219.

⁸⁴ “Affairs in Korea,” *Dundee Courier*, July 25, 1907. The same interview appears in “Japan and Korea,” *Gloucester Citizen*, July 25, 1907; “Korea Situation,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, July 25, 1907; “Appeal to the Powers,” *Manchester Guardian*, July 25, 1907.

generations long past a racial antipathy to the Japanese;” and, lastly, the Japanese appeared to be genuine “in their attempts to make their suzerainty the means of making the position of Korea more assured and the condition of her people tolerable.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, the newspaper was skeptical about the delegation’s appeal “meeting with any response” because “Japan’s international position [was] too strongly fortified.”⁸⁶ Similarly, the *Sheffield Independent* warned the Korean delegation that it was “labouring under a serious delusion if it count[ed] on the support of America, Germany, or France.”⁸⁷

There was some perceptible difference between *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* in terms of how they interpreted this chain of events. The former, describing the Korean emperor’s sending the delegation to the conference as “fatuous,” argued that the emperor had brought about “his own abdication” and “the limitation of the prerogatives of the Throne.”⁸⁸ The latter, on the other hand, said that it was not so much an abdication as a deposition emphasizing Japanese coercion in the process and drew attention to the fact that Japan had “recognised Korea’s independence” “in 1876, in 1894, and again 1904.” When these “declarations forbade [it] to achieve [its] object openly,” the *Manchester Guardian* continued, “Japan decided, once and for all, to suppress Korea’s sovereignty.”⁸⁹ If *The Times*, by actively sharing and disseminating Japan’s expansionist narrative, followed Benjamin Disraeli’s conservative imperialism in covering Korean affairs, the *Manchester Guardian* seems to have remained a ‘reluctant imperialist’ like Gladstone since it, though acknowledging the “great injustices”⁹⁰ inflicted on Koreans by the Japanese, in the end agreed with letting the Japanese “assume responsibility for [Koreans].”⁹¹

The official annexation of Korea by Japan on August 20, 1910, it seems, hardly struck the British as a ‘political’ event in and of itself worthy of special attention. The *Aberdeen Journal*, letting its readers know that annexation was “imminent,” observed that it had “been quite obvious for a considerable time that Japan intended to absorb the peninsula State.”⁹² According to *The Times*, the German government viewed the annexation as “the natural development of past events” and it came “therefore in no way as a surprise.”⁹³ The *Sunderland Daily Echo and*

⁸⁵ “Japan and Korea,” *Dundee Courier*, July 25, 1907.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ “Japan and Korea,” *Sheffield Independent*, July 27, 1907.

⁸⁸ “Japan and Korea,” *The Times*, July 29, 1907.

⁸⁹ “Editorial,” *Manchester Guardian*, July 20, 1907.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ “Summary of News,” *Manchester Guardian*, July 26, 1907.

⁹² “Japan and Korea,” *Aberdeen Journal*, August 20, 1910.

⁹³ “Continental Opinion,” *The Times*, August 25, 1910.

Shipping Gazette confirmed *The Times*'s remark saying that the "change was seen to be inevitable ever since the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war" and "no foreign nation ever thought of withstanding Japan's hegemony of the Far East."⁹⁴ This is why the news of the annexation was "received in almost complete silence by the Press."⁹⁵

It is true that certain newspapers, upon hearing about the annexation, brought attention to the "grave faults" caused by "the immoderate predominance of the military spirit in [Japan's] early days of occupation," whose results were seen to have "been only partially effaced."⁹⁶ Nonetheless Korea's losing its national independence was seen in general not so much as a political matter concerning freedom and liberty, but rather as an economic issue mainly relating to "the continuation of the existing Korean tariff for a period of ten years."⁹⁷ As the *Aberdeen Journal* put it, for the British correspondents, "Is the Open Door to be maintained in Korea?" was "the main question of interest" in terms of the "fate of Korea."⁹⁸

KOREAN CULTURE DEFINED AS 'DEFICIENT' COMPARED WITH THAT OF JAPAN

Between British perceptions of Korean and Egyptian cultures similarities abound. Framed within the binary division between East and West, the two groups were considered to embody what the British thought of as Oriental characteristics and habits of thought like inertia and a lack of creativity. So unscrupulous in advancing personal aims, Cromer lamented, were Egyptians that their society was "honeycombed" with "untruthfulness, corruption, and intrigue."⁹⁹ "[W]ithout the leading and control of a limited number of Europeans," Sir Auckland Colvin (1838–1908) concurred, Egypt, "left to itself," could not dispel "[o]ld habits of corruption, indifference, and laissez-aller," which would inevitably lead to "disorganization" in a matter of weeks.¹⁰⁰

Journalists in Great Britain by and large employed the same vocabulary and conceptual repertoire to talk about Koreans. The three adjectives British

⁹⁴ "Annexation of Korea," *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, August 30, 1910.

⁹⁵ "Annexation of Korea," *Aberdeen Journal*, August 25, 1910; "Continental Opinion," *The Times*, August 25, 1910.

⁹⁶ "Annexation of Korea," *Aberdeen Journal*, August 25, 1910. Also see "Seoul, and the Korean Question," *Manchester Guardian*, August 23, 1910.

⁹⁷ "Japan and Korea," *The Times*, August 30, 1910.

⁹⁸ "The Fate of Korea," *Aberdeen Journal*, August 26, 1910.

⁹⁹ Evelyn Baring Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt, Vol. II* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 322.

¹⁰⁰ Sir Auckland Colvin, *The Making of Modern Egypt* (London: Seeley, 1906), 329.

newspapers most frequently used to describe the national character of Koreans were ‘conservative,’ ‘lazy,’ and ‘weak.’ They were repeatedly portrayed to be, though “physically strong,” “mentally inert,”¹⁰¹ meaning that they were “lazy and idle and of a timid disposition.”¹⁰²

Throughout the 1900s, it was the general opinion of British newspapers that Koreans were, as *The Times* put it, “distinctly conservative.”¹⁰³ In 1904, the newspaper assessed that the prospect that Korea would voluntarily adopt the changes necessary for its progress was “well-nigh hopeless.”¹⁰⁴ Koreans’ conservatism appeared to be not limited to the political sphere. According to the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, the Korean was prejudiced “against making any change whatsoever in his daily or annual routine.”¹⁰⁵ In 1907, *The Times* condemned Korea as being “among the most antiquated of Oriental States a by-word for immovable and unreasonable conservatism.”¹⁰⁶ On one occasion, the newspaper blamed the Chinese, to whom the Korean “ruling classes were bound by custom and interest,” for Korea’s conservatism because the Chinese, it was believed, “encouraged them to set their faces against innovations.”¹⁰⁷

In the opinion of the *Dundee Evening Post*, the “woes of Korea” were “chiefly due to the national character,” whose core it believed was laziness:

The incurably lazy Korean complains of everything, but makes no effort to cure his ills. He is lazy. Even his pipe must be lighted for him. If a scholar, the coolie must prepare his ink before he writes. [...] He lets his finger nails grow long, as a proud testimony to his cultured idleness, and even when he plays a game of chess someone must make the moves for him. In a Minister of State this laziness is carried to its highest expression. When your Minister walks in public he has to be supported—literally propped up—on either side by secretaries. The idea is that the weight of his duties would otherwise crush him to the earth.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ “Korean Life in a Nutshell,” *Dundee Courier*, March 02, 1904.

¹⁰² “War Items,” *Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald*, February 13, 1904. For the role played by ‘the myth of the lazy native’ in colonial ideology, see Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (London: F. Cass, 1977).

¹⁰³ “Korea,” *The Times*, October 16, 1900.

¹⁰⁴ “No title,” *The Times*, September 28, 1904.

¹⁰⁵ “Development of Korea,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, December 23, 1904.

¹⁰⁶ “Japan and Korea,” *The Times*, July 29, 1907.

¹⁰⁷ “The Japanese in Korea,” *The Times*, April 10, 1909.

¹⁰⁸ “In Queer Korea,” *Dundee Evening Post*, January 14, 1904.

In a lecture published in the *Aberdeen Journal*, Reginald J. Farrer (1880–1920), who briefly visited Korea in 1903, gave a similar description of Koreans. “There was,” he said, “no trace to be found in them of national or personal enthusiasm” and “their one pleasure in life was, upon a fine day” to “smoke a pipe the whole day, saying nothing, doing nothing, and talking to nobody.”¹⁰⁹ The *Dundee Courier* attributed the Korean being “di[s]pirited and indifferent” to the “rapacity and cruelty of the officials” that eliminated every “stimulus or inducement to increase his possessions.”¹¹⁰ In any case, Koreans as a race were perceived as being “idle” and “unproductive.”¹¹¹

As seen above, British perceptions of Egyptians were manifestly reflected in their understanding of Koreans. But it was not just the vocabulary in terms of which the descriptions of Koreans by British newspapers bore striking similarities to those of Egyptians. The manners whereby the two Oriental societies were culturally characterized were quite alike as well. They were defined as peoples inherently in need of exterior intervention as opposed to those with rationality and moral superiority. The only difference lay in the fact that while the British discourse on Egypt was founded upon the conceptual division between Egyptians as mentee and the British as mentor, the latter were replaced with the Japanese in the discourse of Korea. Therefore, the newspapers often identified things about Koreans, cultural or otherwise, that could differentiate them from other Oriental groups, especially the Japanese, thereby establishing demarcations within the assumed Orient.

The demarcation began with appearance. For example, the *Aberdeen Journal* informed its readers that there were “two distinct types of Koreans,” one of which, living in northern Korea and bearing a close resemblance to the Manchurians, was “well-built, swarthy, slightly bearded, and with a Jewish cast of features;” the other, living in the south of the country and approximating the Japanese, was “squat in stature, and brown or slightly copper-coloured in complexion.”¹¹² And Lord William Gascoyne-Cecil (1863–1936), in his contribution to *The Times* in 1907, pointed out the erroneous generalization made by Westerners about Asians that they “have identical characteristics,” saying,

¹⁰⁹ “Korea and the Koreans,” *Aberdeen Journal*, February 23 1904.

¹¹⁰ “Korean Life in a Nutshell,” *Dundee Courier*, March 02, 1904.

¹¹¹ “Korea and Japan,” *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, July 19, 1907. One exception to this general opinion was the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser’s* description of Koreans based on Angus Hamilton’s book *Korea* (1904). According to the newspaper, Koreans were as a rule “bright and smiling and fairly industrious” (“Korea,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, January 30, 1904).

¹¹² “An Aberdonian in Korea: Impressions of the Land and Its People,” *Aberdeen Journal*, February 6, 1904.

“China, Japan, and Korea” “are in reality as separate as our great democracy is from the old world autocracy of Russia.”¹¹³

As for the national traits of Koreans, the British tended to characterize deficiency as their defining feature, a feature that supposedly stood out when compared with the neighboring peoples. According to *The Times*, Koreans were “a feeble folk in numbers,” and, while being as “obstinate, as ignorant, and as arrogant as the most retrograde Mandarins,” were “much weaker” than them.¹¹⁴ Korea, argued the *Aberdeen Journal*, did “not possess the inherent capabilities of China or Japan for inconveniencing or astonishing the world”¹¹⁵ and its people were a “meek and peaceful race.”¹¹⁶ Likewise, *The Times* said that there was a “great gulf fixed” between Japan, whose “proud traditions” and “burning patriotism” enabled its great progress, and Korea, to whom “those traditions and that form of patriotism” were “utterly unknown.”¹¹⁷ Koreans, simply put, were “without energy or patriotism.”¹¹⁸

In the minds of the British, Korea and Japan constituted two contrasting types of Oriental society with the former, as opposed to the latter, lacking competence and patriotism.

When it comes to the British elite’s approach to the agony of the Korean people under their mentor, that is, the Japanese, Christianity played an ambivalent role. It is true that most Western missionaries were aware of, and sympathized with, “the bitter humiliation”¹¹⁹ Koreans were passing through. However, their attitudes toward contemporary Japanese rule of Korea and the role to be played by Christianity in Korea were not in agreement with one another. On one hand, Lord Cecil believed that Koreans “would be far happier under the enlightened rule of men like Prince Ito than under the corrupt Government of the Korean Emperor” and wanted the Koreans to “see in the downfall and degradation of their race a higher call,” a call for “eternal liberty.”¹²⁰ He viewed “Christianity becoming political” in Korea, meaning anti-Japanese, as a “danger” and tried to channel Koreans’ earthly frustration into spiritual fulfillment rather than “rebellion against the Japanese yoke.”¹²¹

¹¹³ “Mission Work in Korea,” *The Times*, October 28, 1907.

¹¹⁴ “No title,” *The Times*, September 28, 1904.

¹¹⁵ “Affairs in Korea,” *Aberdeen Journal*, August 23, 1906.

¹¹⁶ “The Resources of Korea,” *Aberdeen Journal*, August 08, 1907.

¹¹⁷ “No title,” *The Times*, September 28, 1904.

¹¹⁸ “Korean Life in a Nutshell,” *Dundee Courier*, March 02, 1904.

¹¹⁹ “Mission Work in Korea,” *The Times*, October 28, 1907.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, Christianity and its missionaries also served as a cultural bridge through which the Korean voices came to be heard by Western readers. For example, the *Western Daily Press* in December 1907 said that American missionary Homer B. Hulbert (1863–1949), along with McKenzie, had been writing “strongly” on Japanese “misrule” in Korea.¹²² In addition, the newspaper introduced the position of Korean Rev. Pyönggu Yun (?–1949) staying in Bristol at that time that “in defiance of her solemn promises and her mask of fair words, Japan [had], since 1895, been playing an ugly, unjust, inhuman, selfish, and brutal role in Korea.”¹²³ In January 1908, the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* reported that the people in Korea “looked to Christianity and the mission schools as the way to the restoration of their national independence.”¹²⁴

KOREAN HISTORY LEARNED THROUGH JAPANESE HISTORIOGRAPHY

It has been pointed out that the British construction of knowledge of Korea in general was an epistemic process characterized by a binary mode of thinking that conceptually contrasted it with Japan, which was in its form almost identical to the way they made sense of Egypt. With respect to Korean history, the British tended to heavily rely on traditional Japanese historiography whose core narrative was found in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, thereby making them treat Japanese historical knowledge epistemologically superior to that of Koreans. As a result, their understanding of the historical relationship between Korea and Japan centered around the idea of Japanese sovereignty over Korea that had been allegedly established by Empress Jingū in the third century and revived by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the sixteenth century, which explains their dismissive attitude towards Korean historiography where the Japanese appeared to be, though militarily not negligible, basically a barbarous race.¹²⁵

In newspapers, the apparent British favoritism toward Japanese historiography was manifested in three discernible, though not unrelated, contexts specific to the 1900s. The first context was a political one in which British newspapers, in the face of Japan’s advance into the Korean Peninsula, felt obliged to give their readers an account that would help them make sense of the situation. On May 27, 1900, the *Observer*, as an explanation for Russia’s efforts to establish a military base

¹²² “A Korean Minister in Bristol,” *Western Daily Press*, December 17, 1907.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ “Student Missionary Conference,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, January 4, 1908.

¹²⁵ See Yoon and Park, “An Unfamiliar Other,” 48–55.

at Masamp'o, stated that "there [had] scarcely been a time since the commencement of the Christian era when [Korea had] not acknowledged a greater or less dependence upon either China or Japan" and the Treaty of Shimonoseki "left Korea more than ever a tempting prey to neighbouring aggression."¹²⁶ On March 21, 1901, *The Times* remarked that Japan wanted Korea not just because of its economic and military interests there, but also because of the "sentimental desire to exercise supremacy over [the] land with which she [was] connected by historical traditions."¹²⁷ On February 21, 1902, a reader named S. H. R. wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* that he "sympathise[d] strongly with [Japan's] desire to resume [its] ancient control over Korea—a desire universally entertained from Emperor to coolie—and hop[ed] that it may be ultimately accomplished."¹²⁸

On December 23, 1903, the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* said that "[a]s early as the second century of the Christian era the Empress Jingo invaded Korea" and, centuries later, "several encounters occurred between Hideyoshi's fleet with that of Korea," adding these events "prove[d] that the Japanese ha[d] more than a sentimental interest in Korea, and help[ed] to explain some of the events at the present time."¹²⁹ For Japan, it was, the *Western Times* contended on January 18, 1904, "a matter of life and death" that Korea "should not fall into the hands of any foreign Powers" and "it was really utterly impossible that Japan in self-preservation should agree to what Russia had asked" since a Japanese empress "acquired Korea for Japan many centuries ago" and "ever since Korea had been under her suzerainty."¹³⁰ The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* deployed the same logic to explain why "Corea [was] of greater importance" to Japan than Port Arthur.¹³¹

After the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, a Japanese vernacular journal, reported the *Dundee Courier*, was "relating the story of the Empress Jingo's descent on Korea in the second century" "as a matter of special interest" in relation to the progress of the war.¹³² On February 13, 1906, the *Manchester Guardian* thought Koreans' protesting "against the final stage of her absorption by Japan" to be

¹²⁶ "The Korean Problem," *Observer*, May 27, 1900.

¹²⁷ "No title," *The Times*, March 21, 1901.

¹²⁸ S. H. R. "The Alliance between England and Japan," *Manchester Guardian*, February 21, 1902.

¹²⁹ "A Navy of 2500 Years Ago," *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, December 23, 1903.

The same article appeared in "Ladies Column," *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, February 5, 1904; "A Navy of 2500 Years Ago," *Portsmouth Evening News*, May 13, 1904.

¹³⁰ "Japan and the Japs," *Western Times*, January 18, 1904.

¹³¹ "Sheffield Manager in Japan and Corea," *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, February 13, 1904.

¹³² "Russians Cooped Up," *Dundee Courier*, March 2, 1904. Since Japan had precedents for subjugating Korea, the *Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald* claimed, Japan's "claim to predominant interest [was] therefore not a modern one." "War Items," *Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald*, February 13, 1904.

“futile.”¹³³ In its view, it was “no new thing for the Korean to submit” given that the country “was successfully invaded by the Empress Jingu” “in 202 A.D.” and Hideyoshi in the sixteenth century.¹³⁴ Upon the abdication of Emperor Kojong in 1907, the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, in regard to the role Japan played in that event, maintained that no one with a little knowledge of the history of the region could “fail to realise that Japan [was] acting an inevitable part.”¹³⁵ In short, British newspapers tended to tap into the Japanese historiographical tradition in order to explain the current state of affairs in the region because the Japanese historical narrative, in addition to its easy availability, seemed to offer a version of the past more consistent with the present situation than the Korean one.

The second context is related to the format in which newspapers gave general information of either Korea or Japan, mainly of the former. Of course, it was often occasioned by notable political events like the military confrontation between Russia and Japan in Korea, but in this case Korean and Japanese histories were given as part of the introduction of the countries rather than as an explanation for a certain political action. For instance, on October 16, 1900, the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* published an excerpt from an introductory book on Korea stating that the tribute Korea “paid to Japan for many years consisted of one gold box containing ginseng, three beautiful horses, forty white falcons, one gold casket,” and “forty tiger skins.”¹³⁶ And the *Aberdeen Journal*, in an article entitled “Facts about Korea,” asserted that Empress Jingū “conquered the south-east of Korea” and “hung her bow over the palace of the defeated King, [writing] upon its gate, ‘The King of Shinra [Silla] is the dog of Japan,’” which was an exact reproduction of the narrative found in the *Nihon shoki*.¹³⁷ And the *Lancashire Evening Post*, investigating the origin of the term ‘Jingo,’ told the readers that “there was a Jingo 17 centuries ago” who “had a taste for military aggression.”¹³⁸ The *Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser*, too, inquired into “the derivation of the word” and explained that the empress’s “spirit and example raised such a patriotic and warlike feeling in the nation that the invasion of Korea” “placed Japan in a position that [had] never since been assailed.”¹³⁹

¹³³ “No title,” *Manchester Guardian*, February 13, 1906.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ “No title,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, July 20, 1907.

¹³⁶ “Selections from *Korea and the Sacred White Mountains*,” *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, October 16, 1900.

¹³⁷ “Facts about Korea,” *Aberdeen Journal*, April 6, 1901. This article was republished in “Facts about Korea,” *Aberdeen Journal*, April 10, 1901.

¹³⁸ “Ancient and Modern,” *Lancashire Evening Post*, May 30, 1901.

¹³⁹ “Jingo,” *Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser*, July 19, 1901.

On March 5, 1904, the *Nottingham Evening Post* briefly mentioned a temple located in Kobe dedicated to Empress Jingū, who, according to it, “was honoured as the conqueror of Korea.”¹⁴⁰ The *Tamworth Herald* introduced a verse sung by Japanese boys that went, “Thou King of Korea doest thou not feel ashamed to flee away from the Queen of the East?” It was, the newspaper explained, “a taunting allusion to the conquest of Korea in the early days by the Empress Jingo.”¹⁴¹ On May 23, 1905, the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* presented the “armada of twelve hundred ships” “the warrior-empress Gingu Kogo” built for the conquest of Korea that was only to be “annihilated by a hurricane of unprecedented violence” as one of the historical instances that “great, aggressive war fleets” had “come to grief.”¹⁴²

On February 5, 1908, *The Times* gave a detailed account of an encyclopedia of world history entitled *The Historians' History of the World*. While the volumes contained a history of China and one of Japan that was described as “rising at a bound from the position of a despised yellow race to the equal ally of England,” Korea was not allowed such a space for its history. In fact, Korea was not on the list of “the most important [33] nations” in world history, which symbolically shows the marginalized position of Korean history in Western understanding of Asian history.¹⁴³ On July 19, 1910, the same newspaper published a detailed evaluation of the Japanese navy that included its past wartime accomplishments, one of which was Empress Jingū’s “thoroughly subjugat[ing]” southern Korea and establishing “a military station” there.¹⁴⁴

The last context was related to British newspapers’ discussions of Japanese women. On April 16, 1904, the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* said:

No nation has a better right to be proud of what its women have done in wartime than Japan. Even the mothers and wives of ancient Sparta have been rivalled in deeds of patriotism and self-sacrifice by the women of Japan. [...] The Japanese woman who above all others distinguished herself in wartime was the Empress Jingu Kogo, who led a Japanese army in

¹⁴⁰ “War in Winter,” *Nottingham Evening Post*, March 5, 1904.

¹⁴¹ “Petty Legends,” *Tamworth Herald*, August 20, 1904. The same article appeared in “Insects of Japan,” *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, June 25, 1904.

¹⁴² “Armadas That Have Come to Grief,” *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, May 23, 1905.

¹⁴³ “A History of Eastern Countries,” *The Times*, February 5, 1908.

¹⁴⁴ “Public Administration in Japan,” *The Times*, July 19, 1910; “Our London Correspondence,” *Manchester Guardian*, March 30, 1910; “The Japanese-British Exhibition,” *The Times*, May 3, 1910; “Public Administration in Japan,” *The Times*, July 19, 1910; “Seoul, and the Korean Question,” *Manchester Guardian*, August 23, 1910.

person to Korea in 203 A.D., and conquered that country. She was equally renowned for her beauty, her piety, her energy, and her martial valour.¹⁴⁵

The newspaper presented Empress Jingū's story as a 'historical' example of Japanese women's bravery, thereby confirming once again its historical authenticity. In a similar manner, the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* introduced the empress as one of the "heroines" in Japanese history when it talked about women's education in Japan.¹⁴⁶ The *Cambridge Independent Press* described Empress Jingū as "the Japanese Joan of Arc"¹⁴⁷ and the *Western Gazette* invoked her name as evidence that females "played an important part in the early history of Japan."¹⁴⁸ Therefore, for British newspapers, the topic of Japanese women constituted a distinct setting in which the traditional Japanese historical narrative was used as established historical fact to corroborate their view of Japanese women.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the introduction, early twentieth-century British discourse on Korea was the product of an epistemic process founded upon the conceptual dichotomy between Korea and Japan that was subsumed under a wider frame of the binary opposition between East and West—a frame that had been already guiding the British in making sense of their experience in and of Egypt. With the overlapping, stratified conceptual oppositions between Korea and Japan and between Orient and Occident the British developed the conception of a hierarchically demarcated Orient, which in turn led them to marginalize Korea both in their perceived world order and epistemic system.

The notion of Korea as a Japanese Egypt symbolically represents such marginalization. It cannot be denied that one of the main reasons the notion became popular in Britain was what may be called Japan's prolonged 'soft power activities' to influence British public opinion. And the shared interests between Britain and Japan, most important of which was to prevent Russia's southward advance in East Asia, probably rendered the British a willing audience for the words of the Japanese. But, most importantly, the series of the aforementioned

¹⁴⁵ "Japanese Women," *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, April 16, 1904.

¹⁴⁶ Edward F. Strange, "Women in Japan," *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, February 28, 1905; "Women in Japan," *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, March 4, 1905.

¹⁴⁷ "Women's Column," *Cambridge Independent Press*, March 3, 1905.

¹⁴⁸ "Notes from All Quarters," *Western Gazette*, May 17, 1907.

dichotomies that underlay the British epistemic attitude toward Korea allowed the conceptual space where such a notion could be meaningfully said and understood.

The analysis of the specific way Korea was depicted by early twentieth-century British newspapers presented in this article calls for the need to revise the macroscopic East/West binary frame in the study of Western images of Korea—a frame that has been somewhat carelessly adopted as an analytical guide by historians, Korean ones in particular. It suggests that early Western understanding of Korea was a delicate, interactive epistemic process of positioning the country within a hierarchically demarcated conception of the Orient rather than unilaterally interpreting their experience in and of Korea as manifestations of supposed Oriental characteristics. In addition, this study offers the overall epistemic context against which early individual Orientalist actions and speeches are to be read.

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JONG-PIL YOON (jpyoon1982@gmail.com) *is a lecturer in the Department of Intercultural Relations, Soonchunhyang University, Korea.*

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