

The Ethical Conflicts in Views of a Colony from Japanese Literature in Colonial Korea in the 1920s: *Waves of the Peninsula* in the *Keijo Daily News*

Wook Kim & Byeongho Jung

Abstract: *Waves of the Peninsula*, an award-winning novel serialized in Japanese in the *Keijo Daily News*, struck a deep chord with the Japanese in Korea. It was adapted into a play by the Mitsubo Association (ミツボ會) theater company and performed in Keijo (Seoul) Theater in May 1923. It was also adapted by Nakanishi Inosuke (中西伊之助) into a movie script in 1935. Furthermore, compared to other Japanese novels based on a Japanese-Korean romance, this novel stands out for its ethical awareness. Even though the novel's Japanese author, Baba Akira, must have felt pressured or conflicted about describing Japanese prejudice against Koreans or Korea's voluntary enlightenment movements, he observed the colonial situation from an ethical point of view, beyond a view of the rulers vs. the ruled. In particular, given that the novel shows an awareness of the Korean people's development of culture and education by describing the specific circumstances of Korean intellectuals without deviating from the purpose of a literary contest, this novel has some features that go beyond those of a typical popular novel or a typical political novel reflecting the intentions of the Government General.

Keywords: colonial literature; Union of Japanese and Korean People; women's solidarity; New Cultural Movement; National University Establishment Movement

Authors: **Wook Kim** (Lead Author) is Research Professor at the Institute for Japanese Studies of Seoul National University (Seoul 08826, Korea). His research interests cover the fields of Japanese-Language Literature in Korea and Taiwan, China during the Japanese colonial era (Email: silhakga@snu.ac.kr). **Byeongho Jung** (Corresponding Author) is Professor at the Department of Japanese Language and Literature of Korea University (Seoul 02841, Korea). He specializes in the study of Japanese Modern literature (Email: bhjung@korea.ac.kr).

标题: 20世纪20年代日本殖民时期朝鲜日语文学中的伦理冲突:《京城日报》中的《半岛之涛》

内容摘要：屡获殊荣的《半岛之涛》是《京城日报》上连载的一部日语小说，它深深打动了在朝日本人。该小说由三坡社剧团改编成话剧，并于1923年5月在京城（首尔）剧院上演。1935年，中西伊之助将其改编成电影剧本。与其他描写日韩恋的日本小说相比，这部小说以其鲜明的伦理意识而广受关注。尽管其作者日籍作家马场章，对小说中描述的日本对朝鲜人的偏见或朝鲜的自愿启蒙运动倍感压力，但他超越了统治者与被统治者的视角，从伦理角度观察殖民状况。更为重要的是，该小说通过描绘朝鲜知识分子的具体情况，展现对当地文化和教育发展的认识，同时也没有偏离文学创作比赛的目的，因此它克服了典型流行小说或政治小说机械反映政府总督府意图的缺陷。

关键词：殖民文学；内鲜一体；妇女团结；新文化运动；国立大学建立运动

作者简介：金旭，韩国首尔大学日本研究所教授，研究方向为韩国和中国台湾的日语文学；郑炳浩，韩国高丽大学日本语文学系教授，研究兴趣包括日本现代文学研究。

Introduction

The *Keijo Daily News* was a newspaper created by the merger of two earlier papers, *Hanseong Sunbo* and *Daedong Shinbo*, by Resident General Ito Hirobumi in September 1906. While it was initially published in both Korean and Japanese, it was published only in Japanese starting in April 1907. After Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910, it became a state-run newspaper for the Japanese Government General in Korea. It was published until October 21, 1945, two months after Japan was defeated in World War II. The *Keijo Daily News* was the largest media outlet that produced colonial discourse and served as the eyes and mouth of Japanese residents of the Korean Peninsula during Japanese colonial rule.

As it did with its other colonies, Imperial Japan settled many Japanese in colonial Korea. As a result, the number of Japanese residents of Korea increased from 835 in 1880, to 171,543 around the time of the annexation in 1910, to 912,583 in 1944, a year before the end of Japanese rule.¹ While they were vastly outnumbered by the Koreans, they had a massive influence on colonial Korea's politics and economy and strengthened the discourse that justified imperial Japan's colonial rule as the ruling class. As the *Keijo Daily News* served as the medium for such discourse, its main focus was the need for Japanese people in Korea to remake or assimilate the Korean people. This view is clearly visible in literary discussions by the *Keijo Daily News*. The *Keijo Daily News*'s articles on literary

1 See Gyu-Soo Lee, *Between the Empire and the Colony*, Seoul: Eomunhagsa, 2018, 43.

discussions during the 1910s tried to instill Japan's ethnic spirit into colonial Korea through nationalistic literature. At the same time, they showed interest in creating new literature set in Korea and different from the mainstream literature in Japan.¹ Moreover, the fundamental basis of the Japanese perception of Korea and Koreans at that time was a contemptuous view that considered Korea and Koreans as one step inferior or lagging behind Japan, viewing them with a sense of disdain and as entities of lesser value or development.²

Unlike these discussions by Japanese people, Koreans across the country who were outraged by Japan's militaristic rule in the 1910s showed their commitment to independence through the March First Movement in 1919. Taken by surprise by this movement, Japan allowed a degree of press freedom for Koreans. Thus in 1920, many newspapers edited by Koreans were established, taking a different tack from *Maeil Shinbo*, a sister Korean newspaper of the *Keijo Daily News* supervised by the Government General. This accelerated the media divide between the rulers and the ruled. Amid this change, Japanese people in Korea were quite puzzled, and expressions and explorations of this disturbance also appeared in the *Keijo Daily News*.

How to interpret this disturbance, especially from the literary perspective, is truly an ethical issue.³ Hence this paper looks into the ethical disruption in the view of Japanese people in Korea toward colonial Korea as represented in the *Keijo Daily News* in the 1920s, when many Korean-led media outlets were created after the March First Movement. *Waves of the Peninsula*, which won a 1922 literary contest celebrating the *Keijo Daily News*'s 5,000th issue, was selected and serialized by the *Keijo Daily News*, the Government General's official media outlet, as a literary work that fit the circumstances of that time. Thus it was closely related to Japan's policies of cultural rule and slyly underpinned by the propaganda of "One Japan and Korea" and the ideology of ethnic assimilation. Nevertheless, the novel still shows Korean intellectuals' underlying aspirations to improve their awareness of their ethnic culture and develop education. Furthermore, it fictionally describes Cheondoism's

1 See Byeong-Ho Jung, "The Literary Column (1906-20) of Keijonippo and 'Japanese-Language Literature' in Colony Joseon," *Japan Study* 29 (2018): 414.

2 See Makoto Masui, "A Journey through Colonial Korea: Iwaya Sazanami's Experiences in Korea," *Border Crossings* 12 (2021): 54.

3 See Nie Zhenzhao, "The Scientific Turn of Humanities Studies," *Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature* 4 (2022): 563-568.

(天道教) enlightenment movement¹ as well as a movement to establish a private university, both of which actually occurred in Korea. It is worth noting that the novel captures the colony as seen by agitated Japanese people in Korea amid a turbulent colonial landscape in the early 1920s.

Furthermore, given that the *Keijo Daily News* served as a mainstream media outlet for Japanese people in Korea at that time, an analysis of ethical conflicts in the colonial view of Japanese people in Korea as manifested in the novel would more clearly show how Japanese people in Korea felt at the time about Koreans' determination to independently enlighten themselves.

Background of *Waves of the Peninsula* and Literary View of Japanese in Colonial Korea

The *Keijo Daily News* reached an important crossroads in the 1920s. After General Governor Saito Makoto was appointed, the Government General reviewed its militaristic rule of Korea after the March First Movement in 1919 and initiated a policy shift known as "cultural rule." Under it, *Dong-A Ilbo*, *Chosun Ilbo*, and *Sisa Newspaper* obtained publication permission under the Government General's permission policies from December 1919 to January 1920, which gave Korean people a certain level of press freedom. The revival of Korean newspapers threatened the dominant position not only of *Maeil Shinbo*, the *Keijo Daily News*'s sister newspaper, but also of the *Keijo Daily News*, as talented Korean journalists such as Lee Sang-hyup left and participated in *Dong-A Ilbo*.²

Waves of the Peninsula, which emerged amid these circumstances, was one of two novels to win a literary contest celebrating the 5,000th issue of the *Keijo Daily News* in 1922. This contest was for novels that "described contemporary Korea," and as Kim Hyo-soon suggested, it was "held in a way that fully reflected colonial cultural policies as intended by the Government General at a time when the colony was gaining attention internationally after the March First Movement" (179). It also demonstrated that the *Keijo Daily News*, which previously enjoyed a monopoly as a media outlet on the Korean Peninsula, tried to follow the trend of the Government General's policies by adopting a tone of assimilation and inclusion instead of a didactic tone. During that time, there was a considerable spread of

1 Jeong-ho Kim said, "Cheondoism's enlightenment movement in Korea and the New Culture Movement in China shared similarities in their backgrounds in that they pointed to the invasions by Japan and Western powers, a lack of government-level response since the mid-19th century, and the limitations of other groups in power to respond to an external or internal crisis and attributed these failures to traditional Confucianism."

2 See Dae-Hwan Kim, "General Governor Saito's Cultural Policy and the *Keijo Daily News*," *Research Article Collection* 17 (2004): 9.

discourse advocating for “harmony and cooperation between both ethnic groups,” emphasizing that unfair treatment and discrimination against Koreans by Japanese residents in Korea should not be condoned (Jung, “The Formation of Class” 28). For instance, the following remarks appeared in a review by Shimazaki Toson, a leading judge in the literary contest:

Neither Japanese people nor Korean people like to call Korea a “colony.” Given its mutual understanding and friendliness, the Japan-Korea (内鮮) relationship cannot be coldly expressed with the word “colony.” It is completely different from some Europeans coming to, exploiting, and occupying the East for their own interests and calling it a “colony.” Thus these two literary works have a familiar understanding of Korea and its people and communicate friendliness to both Japanese and Korean people. As many books or articles providing commentary on Korea are all based on some theory and rank Japanese and Korean people differently based on that theory, they just end up presenting a level-headed theory of assimilation or union. However, we can find truly equal and harmonious assimilation in an understanding through art. (5)

To begin with, Shimazaki is wary of the discourse that calls Korea a “colony.” There are two intentions behind his view. One is an attempt to distinguish imperial Japan from other Western powers in an era where socialism was emerging and criticizing Western imperialism. In other words, the view is that imperial Japan did not exploit and occupy Korea for its own interests, unlike the West’s colonies, and Japanese people objected to calling Korea a colony. The other one is that Koreans also objected to the word “colony” and it would be more realistic to say that this came from their wish to deny the reality in which Korea, which had long been an independent state, was reduced to a protectorate and dependent territory, and not because of mutual understanding and friendliness as Shimazaki suggested.

Nonetheless, what is important in Shimazaki’s review is that he called for novels that could make Korea and Japan feel friendlier toward each other, and he selected the winners based on this criterion. Furthermore, he suggested making people naturally accept concepts such as a theory of assimilation or union through “art,” not through indoctrination. Although the literary arts were often used as a political means or tool, it was such a trend at that time that Shimazaki, who was known as one of the greatest authors in Japanese naturalism, was not free from such a view.

However, Baba Akira, the author of *Waves of the Peninsula*, wrote the novel with a more determined view toward literature. In his “Acceptance Article,” he

mentioned two characteristics of the novel. One was that “while it was natural to heighten tension between chapters to encourage more interest from readers as it was a serialized novel, the author tried not to make it feel too artificial” (Baba 5). The other came from his belief that “while an art is an individual’s expression, a new art can be created when it can fulfill its moral mission” (ibid.). The moral mission here refers to “cultivating new social awareness” (ibid.), and he mentioned that although the novel did not break new ground, he made every effort to cultivate new social awareness. He added that “since I believe it is impure to establish settings too intentionally and artificially, I thought quite deeply about finding a balance” (ibid.). Hence the novel tried to encourage interest from the public as a popular novel while raising new social awareness as a literary work and reflected the author’s efforts to exclude artificial settings as far as possible. “The task of literature, accordingly, is to depict how ethical relationships and moral order undergo changes, examine their consequences, and ultimately provide experience and lessons emerging from human life for the progress of human civilization” (Nie, “Ethical Literary Criticism: A Basic Theory” 190).

In short, the author was internally conflicted between “cultivating new social awareness” through literature, which was his literary aspiration, and the artificial condition of “faithfully reflecting cultural policies” (ibid.), which the literary contest required of the novel. These two points suggested that the author, coming from the perspective of the rulers, was ethically conflicted about describing the ruled Koreans, between the didactic intention of promoting an ethnic union of Korea and Japan and his desire to portray Korea as he saw and felt it.

Waves of the Peninsula was serialized in the literary section of the *Keijo Daily News* from August 1, 1922, to late December 1922. Unfortunately, today only Chapters 1 to 104 are available, as the issues of the *Keijo Daily News* after December 4, 1922, have been lost. Fortunately, however, a play based on the novel was performed in Keijo (Seoul) Theater starting on May 10, 1923, and the plot is described in the May 4, 1923, issue of the *Keijo Daily News*, which permits an educated guess as to how the novel ends.

The protagonist of the novel is Kaino Kinichi, a talented student attending the School of Law at Tokyo Imperial University. He is an adopted son of Shiroyama Sanjo, the president of Shiroyama General Partnership, one of the largest corporations in Korea. Shiroyama Sanjo tries to make Kinichi marry his only biological daughter, Saeko, and maintain the reputation and wealth he has gained in Korea. However, Kinichi declines to become the successor to the Shiroyama family business, which would guarantee a wealthy life. Instead, he chooses to marry a

Korean woman, Ok-yeob, and tries to develop industries for Korea and enlighten and educate its people together with her. While Shiroyama Saeko is an arranged wife-to-be for Kinichi, she is conflicted due to her failed relationship with Kinichi and her dissatisfaction with her father when she is impressed by a performance by Miraiza (未来座), a famous theater company coming to Keijo (Seoul). Then she dreams of becoming an actress and goes to Tokyo to create her own theater company. Ahn Ok-yeob (安玉葉) is a Korean housemaid who was originally an orphan but was taken in by the Shiroyama family and called Yasuko (安子), a Japanese name fashioned after her Korean name. She is always wearing Korean dresses, is good at Japanese, and falls in love with Kinichi, an adopted son of the family. After she falls in love and runs away with Kinichi, she dreams of one day establishing a university in Korea while participating in a movement to enlighten Korean children. Ahn Sung-sik (安成植) is Ok-yeob's biological elder brother and a young Korean man in his late 20s who was separated from his sister when he was little. After graduating from the School of Politics and Economy at Waseda University, he returns to Keijo (Seoul), organizes the Korean Culture Academic Society with Lee Byung-hwan, who serves an editor-in-chief for Korea's first literary magazine, *The Peninsula*, and leads the New Cultural Movement. While in college, he was in a relationship with a Japanese woman that failed in the end.

As shown above, the story is mostly one of these four men and women from Korea and Japan. At the center of them is the antagonist Shiroyama Sanjo, a Japanese entrepreneur in Korea, and the story develops as each of them tries to follow through on his or her commitments. There are three implications for the overarching topic in this novel, which, in the author's words, is "cultivating new social awareness": the "possibility of ethnic union," "possibility of free love," and "possibility of development in Korean culture" (4). This paper examines how these possibilities manifest themselves over the course of the novel.

Ethnic Union through Women's Solidarity

To begin with, this paper looks into the "possibility of ethnic union." The possibility of such a union based on intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans has already been discussed by Kim Hyo-soon.¹ Thus this paper will only talk about the scene

1 In her paper, Kim Hyo-soon suggests that a possibility of ethnic union through intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans is not presented from the perspective of government policies for cultural rule but described with various aspects from an observational standpoint in the novel. In regards to intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans, the novel features Koreans' thoughts, an unsuccessful case of a mixed Japanese-Korean couple in love, and negative perceptions of the marriage between a second-generation member of a Japanese family living in Korea and a Korean.

in the novel that implies the union of the two peoples through women's solidarity. While Shiroyama Saeko is an arranged wife-to-be for Kinichi, she becomes aware that Kinichi has fallen in love with a Korean woman, Ok-yeob, and tries to kick her out of the Shiroyama family. However, her father, Shiroyama Sanjo, does not allow it, saying, "Do you really think Kinichi wants to marry a Korean woman?" (ch. 14, 1) Instead, he suggests that Ok-yeob go to Tokyo and study there and tries to rape her as a condition of his suggestion.

1) Ok-yeob turns pale, like a rabbit hunted down by a beast.

"Please, sir [...] Forgive me [...]"

Ok-yeob barely speaks with her body stiff.

"No, you don't need to ask for forgiveness. You just have to come closer to me. Ha ha ha, cute. Are you scared? You don't need to be scared. Come over here [...] If you scream, I will not forgive you."

His gentle persuasion turns into a threat in the end [...]

"Father! You [...] Can't you understand what your daughter says!"

With that screeching voice, Saeko appears. (ch. 21, 1)

2) Saeko speaks to Yasuko with a sad look.

"I hate Yasuko, too. You are someone I hate, since you take my love away, but my father was doing something horrible like this. I am a woman, too. I take the side of women. In as much as we think from women's point of view, we come to confront old men like my father [...]" (ch. 22, 1)

Here, Sanjo is a Japanese colonizer and a man, while Ok-yeob is a colonized Korean and a woman. It is quite symbolic that, in Scene 1, the author, a Japanese in Korea, describes a male colonizer's sexual exploitation of a colonized woman. However, as Scene 2 reveals, Saeko empathizes with Ok-yeob and saves her because both are women, although she is on the side of the Japanese colonizers. Although Saeko hates her romantic rival Ok-yeob so much that she is trying to kick her out of the family, Saeko protects her in order to fight men's sexual exploitation of women. In other words, she overcomes the dichotomy of the colonizer and the colonized through women's solidarity. This is in line with class solidarity in socialism, which stresses solidarity in the working class as a way to overcome ethnic conflicts. When it comes to the assimilation of Korea and Japan, women's solidarity may be much more effective than ethnic solidarity or class solidarity, and it is worth noting that this dynamic is also featured in the novel.

Korean-Japanese Romance and the Modern Style of Free Love

Another possibility is the “possibility of free love.” While it is clear that one of the pillars in the story is intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans, what drives such a shift is free love. Kinichi’s choice to marry Ok-yeob and Saeko’s choice not to be tied down by the institution of marriage are each made independently. Still, the implications of such choices are also well-described in the two following plots:

3) He does not hate the love Saeko gave him. Nonetheless, come to think of it, he has never loved Saeko as a woman from the beginning. The reason he was being nice to her was just a universal human feeling that he had just because he grew up with her. It was not love or anything like that. Hence, he was able to leave her given just a bit of motivation. He even thinks that he may have taken advantage of it. Had he married Saeko, he would not have been able to know what love was for his entire life. (ch. 59, 1)

4) “Even if you do not follow the institution of marriage, you know women are faithful, right?”

“Women’s faithfulness [...]? Ho ho ho.”

“What is so funny about it?”

“It is funny. The word does not even suit you. Now, you said that word. Even in an era that values faithfulness, it is outdated for you.” (ch. 95, 1)

Scene 3 portrays Kinichi talking to himself as he escapes the house to find Ok-yeob on the night before his marriage to Saeko. To be with Ok-yeob, he forgoes the marriage that could give him massive wealth and reputation. He gives up being a successful Japanese man in Korea and chooses a poor Korean woman instead. His choice, however, leads to an ordeal for him and later leaves him so impoverished that he must sell his favorite books to a secondhand bookstore.

In Scene 4, Saeko is jilted, goes to Tokyo, dates a man named Tomii, and eventually breaks up with him due to each other’s extreme approach to free love. Tomii believes that his relationship with Saeko is a marriage in all but name and is still binding. However, Saeko indirectly criticizes Tomii, who once dated a married woman in the name of free love. It is not just about criticizing the concept of faithfulness. While faithfulness is valued in free love, it points out the contradiction that only men, and not women, are expected to be faithful. Actually, their contradiction stems from the sphinx factor, “a rational man is an embodiment of the sphinx factor, a combination of human factor and animal factor” (Nie, “Ethical

Literary Criticism: Sphinx Factor and Ethical Selection” 396). His behavior of dating with a married woman is driven by the animal factor, while the fact he believes his marriage is still binding is due to his human factor.

As such, this novel presents a tragic ending for intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans, deviating from the conventional discourse on that subject. Likewise, it exposes the ethical contradiction of faithfulness while describing the negative aspects of male-dominated free love at that time. While this point is a feature of popular novels and is designed to attract public interest, as the author suggests, it is very characteristic that the novel does not simply “faithfully reflect cultural policies” but also exposes the negative aspects of intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans as well as free love.

Between the Colonizer’s Political Slogan and the Colonized People’s Desire for Enlightenment

In a way, the two types of “new social awareness” mentioned above are a result of the author’s colonial view based on fiction. The reason the “possibility of development in Korean culture” becomes more meaningful is that the story about the possibility is based on real events that happened in Korea. For the novel, the author adopts almost unchanged the Korean New Cultural Movement and Private University Establishment Movement by Koreans, which actually occurred in Korea in 1920.

5) A big poster of the Ethnic Culture Conference (民族文化大講演会) is posted with red lines [...] The poster includes Ahn Sung-sik, who graduated from a university in Tokyo last year with academic honors, currently serves as the leader of the Korean Culture Academic Society (朝鮮文化学会), and is respected by young people. Furthermore, it includes Lee Byung-hwan (李秉煥), an editor-in-chief of the magazine *The Peninsula* (半島), who is tall and sturdy and looks like an Oriental hero, with many subordinates. It also includes Park Eun-seok (朴殷錫), who traveled in the US and France and has studied the advanced culture of Europe and the US for many years. In other words, speakers attending the conference are almost representatives of young Korean intellectuals and visionaries who are leading the New Cultural Movement (新文化運動). (ch. 78, 1)

The author, Baba Akira, seems to have a good understanding of Korea, and one example of this is that he mentions the Korean New Cultural Movement. The novel also spotlights the New Cultural Movement, led by the Korean Culture Academic

Society, and Korea's magazine *The Peninsula*. These must have been based, respectively, on the New Cultural Movement¹ led by Cheondoism in 1920, and the Korean modern magazine *Gaebyeok* (開闢). Ahn Sung-sik finishes his study in Japan, returns to Korea, and represents young intellectuals who lead efforts to improve Korean culture. Even though young Korean intellectual Ahn Sung-sik can easily get a job with his bachelor's degree in politics and economy from Waseda University, he commits himself to the Korean New Cultural Movement, as he says he is just waiting for the right time for "a great cause (大望)." The issues that he may face because he has one foot in Korea and the other in Japan are also featured in this novel.

6) The much-anticipated Ethnic Culture Conference is thrown into confusion and quietly discontinued due to caution from police officers conducting temporary surveillance [...] In particular, Ahn Sung-sik cannot calm down, since he cannot understand tonight's criticism. He wonders why such criticism has been made against him. Undoubtedly, he has nothing to be ashamed of.

"Traitor! Bitch! How insulting it is. How humiliated he is" [...]

"Apart from whether such misunderstanding is artificial or not disgraceful, I cannot help but think that it has undermined our pure movement." (ch. 82, 1)

In Scene 6, the Ethnic Culture Conference goes awry after Ahn Sung-sik is criticized by the audience. They accuse him of making massive profits by selling his younger sister to a rich Japanese family in Korea. There are some negative aspects to intermarriage between Japanese and Korean people. In other words, the novel describes a class divide depending on one's ethnicity in colonial Korea, and Korean people actually disapprove of intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans. While Ahn Sung-sik is criticized primarily for trying to get his younger sister to marry a Japanese man, he is also criticized for having studied in Japan. This emerges in the scene where the instigator mocks Ahn Sung-sik for having studied in Japan and come back to Korea. As described in Scene 5, there is a clear contrast with Lee Byung-hwan and Park Eun-seok, who are also participating in the New Cultural Movement: one is an influential figure from Korea, and the other has studied in the West.

Regarding Cheondoism's New Cultural Movement, which actually took place, Kim Jeong-ho (2011) argues that although Korea and China's New Cultural

1 Si-yong Go states that the Korean New Cultural Movement "began as a religious movement but expanded into a movement for independence, education, women, adolescents, young people, farmers, the economy, literature, and publication and developed into a continuous and systematic action-based movement to protect the country, comfort its people, and save the people from pain."

Movements were triggered by the March First Movement and the May Fourth Movement against Japan, “China was reduced to a semi-colony of Japan and Western powers but maintained a minimum level of state independence, while Korea was reduced to an outright colony of Japan after Japan took away its diplomatic rights in 1905 and annexed the country by force in 1910. Hence, enlightenment movements targeting the public were very limited in the country” (“Comparative Analysis” 280). He points out political limitations: it was not possible to carry out an enlightenment movement independently, as Korea was colonized by imperial Japan. From the perspective of Japanese residents of Korea, however, Koreans’ view of pro-Japanese people is problematic with respect to the enlightenment movement by Koreans. The author gives his view of the actual enlightenment movement of Koreans and slyly describes Korean people’s opposition to intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans as well as pro-Japanese people as “the foolish public’s opposition to” “the pure movement” (ch. 82, 1).

Meanwhile, Ok-yeob, the Korean woman who has experienced ethnic and class discrimination (including gender hierarchy) in the Shiroyama family, dreams of establishing a school in Korea so that Kang Bong-joon who is Ok-yeop’s pupil and other Koreans in the coming generations will not experience such discrimination. This is also closely associated with the Korean Private University Establishment Movement, which was propagated in 1920.

7) What the Kinichi couple realizes when they come here is that there is no opportunity in this rural town to educate Korean children [...] Meanwhile, although the Government General built public primary schools, it has not reached out to rural towns like this. Even if it has a *seodang* (private village school) or public primary school, Korean residents in the rural town where Kinichi lives cannot find any money to send their kids to school. Because of this, children aged around 10 only care about hanging out day after day. (ch. 67, 1)

8) “Big aspirations, what are they?”

Kinichi jokingly asks and drinks tea prepared by his wife.

“Take a guess.”

“You want me to guess?”

“Yes.”

“Build a university in Korea.”

[...]

“Big aspirations, aren’t they?”

“Yes, they are.”

“But if yours are not as big as this...”

“You are quite committed. I guess you will also raise our baby wisely, right?”
(ch. 69, 1)

As described in Scene 7, a lack of educational institutions for Korean children became a persistent problem from the Korean Empire (1897-1910) to the early days of colonial rule. Public primary schools in the novel are four-year schools, unlike the six-year elementary schools attended by Japanese. There were so few public primary schools that many Korean children could not attend school due to financial and circumstantial reasons. In 1910, when Japan annexed Korea by force, the percentage of school-age children attending public primary school was 0.9% (20, 194/2, 139, 991), and although the number increased by 1922, when the novel was published, it was still only 8.5% (238, 058/2, 843, 847).¹ Japanese people in Korea recognized these circumstances, as the novel shows.

Scene 8 concerns aspirations to establish a private university. As mentioned earlier, the First Korean Education Ordinance, announced in August 1911, explicitly reflected higher education guidance that “since Korea is not yet in the same circumstances as Japan, education should be provided in line with the timing (時勢) and level of the public (民度)” (C. Lee 27), and this ordinance needed be amended in order to establish a university, which is an institution of higher education. Coincidentally, the Second Korean Education Ordinance was announced in April 1922, when the novel was serialized. The ordinance extended the number of school years from four to six in public primary schools and from four to five in public high schools. It also included requirements for the establishment of teachers’ schools and universities, which paved the way to the establishment of a university in colonial Korea. In 1923, the Private University Establishment Movement was started by Koreans including Cho Man-sik and Han Yong-un, and imperial Japan also prepared the Korean Imperial University Establishment Committee. As a result, the Preliminary Department, Keijo Imperial University was established in Korea’s capital, Keijo (Seoul), in 1924.² The lack of education for children and Korean people’s aspirations

1 See Furukawa Noriko, *Status of Attendance in Primary Educational Institutions During Japanese Colonial Rule*, 142.

2 Choong-woo Lee wrote that “while Keijo Imperial University was established by Japanese people, two factors the March First Movement—a massive struggle by the Korean people, and the Private University Establishment Movement—were the driving force in the background. Therefore, the university’s founding would not have been possible had it been not for Korea’s aspirations and voluntary movements for higher education.”

to establish a university were major factors.

The author, Baba Akira, a Japanese resident of Korea, was also aware of this issue, and the issue of education for Korean people is an overarching topic in the novel. There is no way to know for sure how the novel actually ended, as the corresponding issues of the *Keijo Daily News* have not survived. However, we do have a synopsis of a play adapted from the novel and performed a year after the novel was serialized (*Keijo Daily News* Synopsis). It ends with Saeko donating the wealth of the Shiroyama family to fund Kinichi's Korean rural reclamation program and establish a university in Korea.

Conclusion

As we have seen, although this novel won a literary contest held by the Government General and the *Keijo Daily News* to encourage "faithfully reflecting cultural policies" (Baba 5), it demonstrates some efforts by the author, a Japanese in Korea, to provide his own literary view. In other words, while pursuing a topic in line with the intended purposes of the literary contest, the novel tries to tell a story that can cultivate "new social awareness" (ibid.). This "new social awareness" includes themes in line with the Government General's political agenda, such as intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans and ethical criticism of outdated ways of thinking, such as demanding faithfulness from women in free love.

What is worth noting in this novel, however, is that the New Cultural Movement and Private University Establishment Movement—two burning issues for Korean people at that time—were well known to Japanese people in Korea and are represented in the text almost unchanged from real life. Even though the novel's author, Baba Akira, must have felt pressured or conflicted as one of the colonizers about realistically describing Japanese discrimination against Koreans or Korea's voluntary enlightenment movements, he observed the colonial situation from an ethical point of view, beyond the view of the rulers vs. the ruled. In particular, given that the novel presents an awareness of the Korean people's development of culture and education by describing specific circumstances for Korean intellectuals without deviating from the purposes of a literary contest, this novel has some features that go beyond the typical popular novel or the typical political novel reflecting the intentions of the Government General. The description of the Korean people's will for self-reliance manifests the author's ethical awareness to coexist with Koreans on an equal footing as a Japanese in Korea who regarded Korea as part of his identity.

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