

The "Japan Times" Extra.

明治四十三年八月二十九日發行 號外 (明治三十三年三月二十二日 第三種郵便物認可)

Tokyo, Monday, August 29, 1910.

JAPAN AND KOREA MADE ONE.

THE EMPEROR OF JAPAN REIGNS OVER CHOSEN NOW.

FOREIGN INTERESTS IN KOREA RECEIVE FULL PROTECTION.

DECLARATION.

Notwithstanding the earnest and laborious work of reforms in the administration of Korea, in which the Governments of Japan and Korea have been engaged for more than four years since the conclusion of the Agreement of 1905 the existing foreign as well as Japanese, will there be admitted and goods may be imported into and exported from those ports.

THE TEXT OF THE TREATY OF ANNEXATION.

Treaty, and have affixed thereto their seals.

Viscount MARAKATA TERAUCHI, Resident-General.

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

YE WAN YONG, Minister President of State,

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

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

Uneasy neighbors across the sea

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

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

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



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

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

Apology politics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Past and present

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Normalization

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

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