

*Tōa renmei undō to Chōsen, Chōsenjin: Nitchū sensōki ni okeru shokuminchi teikoku Nihon no danmen*, by Toshihiko Matsuda. Tokyo: Yushisha, 2015. 222 pp., ¥ 5000, ISBN: 9784903426952 (hardcover)

Yushukan—the war museum of the Yasukuni shrine—exhibits a grand narrative spanning Commodore Perry’s 1854 arrival in Japan to the 1945 independence of Asian countries. The last section ends with a map decorated with colorful flags of newly independent Asian countries. Yet the Korean peninsula is left empty with no flag, which conveys an inexplicable feeling to viewers. The map seems to be incapable of portraying two conflicting realities in one plane: Japan’s struggle against Western invasion and Japan’s colonization of Korea.

Matsuda’s book tackles issues that emerged from the intersection of those conflicting realities. The most crucial problem that the Japanese empire faced during the second Sino-Japanese war was how to make sense of its colonization of Korea while simultaneously proposing the New East Asian Order (*Tōa shin jitsujō*). Although many Koreans sought to raise the status of Korea in accordance to the reform of the Japanese empire, Japan’s attention was mainly paid to Manchuria and China, Korea was only forced to be thoroughly assimilated to Japan. I have called that ambiguous state of Koreans a “position-less position” (Hong 2009, 288), a point that interestingly coincides with an empty map of Korean peninsula in Yushukan.

Matsuda analyzes the East Asian League (*Tōa renmei*) movement against the backdrop of various discourses about the New East Asian Order with an emphasis on the movement’s relation to Korea and Koreans. In so doing, Matsuda reveals previously unexamined aspects of an asymmetrical political structure between imperial Japan and colonial Korea. Since 1996 when his article was published, which later was developed to Chapter One of this book, the author took twenty years to delve into this issue. The content of the book is as follows:

Introduction: What is the East Asian League Movement?

Chapter One: East Asian League’s Stance on Colonial Korea

Chapter Two: Kang Yōngsōk and the East Asian League Movement in Korea

Chapter Three: Cho Yōngju and the East Asian League Movement in Kyoto

Chapter Four: The East Asian League Movement by Koreans Living in Nagoya

Chapter Five: Postwar East Asian League Movement and Koreans

Conclusion: Long Shadow of the East Asian League Movement

In Introduction, the author pinpoints that most of leading Japanese thinkers intentionally overlooked the issue of Japan's colonies including Korea, which should have been their primary focus in relation to the New East Asian Order and sheds light on the singularity of Ishihara Kanji and the East Asian League movement who exceptionally attended to the colony issue. Matsuda also traces the genealogy of studies on the East Asian League discourse and movement to show the issue of Korea fails to be part of existing scholarship and sought to fill the gap by looking at previous studies on Korean intellectuals during the Sino-Japanese war. Matsuda's analysis on the intersection between Japan and Korea will play a decisive role in illuminating a "cross-section of the Japanese empire during the Sino-Japan war," as the subtitle shows, beyond simply uncovering previously unexamined facts about the East Asian League. As for a summary of the following chapters, I quote the author's description appeared at the end of the introduction chapter.

Chapter 1 tracks how theories on Korea emerged and developed within the East Asian League, focusing on Ishihara Kanji's discourse. In the beginning phase of the East Asian League movement, the issue of Korea was barely discussed. Yet Ishihara gradually has unfolded his discussion of Korea since 1939 when he started interacting with Koreans. This chapter further examines the League's critique of Japan's assimilation policy as well as the changes in demand for self-governing of Korea.

Chapter 2 investigates the Korean branch of the East Asian League, led by the convert Kang Yōngsōk. Matsuda first examines Korean converts' thoughts in general and shows that Kang voluntarily converted to Japan in the Sino-Japanese war era and was involved with the League's movement. Although Kang participated into the communist movement in Kwangju in the 1920s, he converted to the Japanese empire turning to Satomi Kishio's theory of the national body of Japan before the Sino-Japanese war and he shifted to the East Asian League movement from 1939. Kim Yongje, a participant of the East Asian League movement, has argued that the League's movement in Korea was in fact an independence movement disguised as a pro-Japanese group. This

chapter assesses that argument in detail.

Chapter 3 looks at Korean study abroad students' movement in Kyoto organized by Cho Yŏngju for two years from 1940. Similar to the League's movement in Korea, Cho's movement was also convert's activism. Cho, however, made a clear distinction between his activism and an independence movement. Matsuda offers a broad picture of Cho's movement, whereas attending to the difference in political consciousness between leaders of the group and the majority of participating students.

Chapter 4 examines Nagoya Youth Group's (organized in 1942) movement led by Yun Sangwon. Nagoya Youth Group consisted of Korean youths and women taught by Koizumi Kikue. What is peculiar about that movements is that main participants were Koreans and women who were marginalized in the society. Also, the group's Korean members were under age and therefore a generation below than members of Cho's group. The author examines the relations between the age difference and their political consciousness.

The final Chapter 5 tracks the political paths of Korean activists of the League posterior to the World War II, while looking at the GHQ's dissolution of the League following Japan's defeat as well as the disruption of the League's subsequent groups. This chapter supplements the afterlife of the League that no previous studies examined and also shows that for Koreans was the League's movement more than a simply wartime deviation from normative activism.

The first contribution of this book is to reveal a whole aspect of Korea as colony and its crucial status within the Japanese empire. Korea was more than one of many colonies of Japan and played an indispensable role in sustaining the empire. Hence, without tackling the issue of Korea, the slogans of the New East Asian Order or the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity (*Dai tōa kyōei ken*) would have been merely nominal, a point that Koreans foregrounded by engaging with the East Asian League discourse. Through the superb analysis of Nagoya, Matsuda demonstrates that women and Koreans, marginalized within the society, invested their lives and hope in the East Asian League movement, a case that reveals how demands for national liberation and social transformation generated the reform of the Japan empire. It also evokes the fact that not only Koreans but also *Suiheisha*—a society for liberating outcasts (*burakumin*)—enthusiastically supported the East Asian Cooperative (*Tōa kyōdōtai*).

Secondly, this book uncovers previously unknown facts about the “convert movement” mobilized by Korean members of the East Asian League.

By thoroughly consulting first-hand materials—official documents, letters, memoirs, and so on—Matsuda tracked the ways in which different forms of Koreans’ desire toward “happiness” converged to the East Asian League movement. Another significant contribution is to unveil the activity of the East Asian League in Korea. Furthermore, the author sheds light on various strands within the East Asian League movement and dissimilarities among different generations.

Thirdly, Matsuda’s study offers a comprehensive stance over the East Asian League by looking at its post-WWII activism as well as the wartime movement. His book excavated the fact that Cho Yŏngju, a former core leader of the East Asian League, assumed the chair of the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan) and resumed his activism in a group that succeeded to the East Asian League in post-war Japan. This fact proves Matsuda’s point that the wartime activism of Koreans in the East Asian League was no temporary deviation, and we can recognize that the pursuit of happiness of the Koreans continued in an odd sort way through the World War II and the liberation of the colony.

While supporting issues and analyses that Matsuda offered, I would like to add my own views on them. I suggest that we should understand the discourse and movement of the East Asian League as the project for the postcolonial order. My comments below is an discursive experiment to engage with Matsuda’s study intended to overcome the anti-Japan/pro-Japan divide from an unprecedented standpoint, while I am conscious that I review a Japanese-language book for an English-language journal published in Korea.

The globe during the interwar period witnessed a change in the empire-colony world order as seen in the emergence of the British Commonwealth and the Soviet Union, a transformation that reached a climax at the World War II. The birth of the East Asian League and Korean people’s response to it also should be understood as part of that global flow. Matsuda has argued that the limit of the East Asian League’s call for self-governing of Korea was to demand not self-determination of political issues but that of administrative ones (p. 22). However, *Main Principle of East Asian League* echoes Pak Ch’i’u’s, Sŏ Insik’s, and other Korean intellectuals’ call insisting that the principle of the East Asian Cooperative ought to be expanded to the Japan-Korea relations beyond the Sino-Japan relations (Hong 2011, 84). Ishihara’s idea of “international harmony” (*minzoku kyōwa*) was inevitably a partisan notion, given the heated debates of the time between the “harmonious Japan-Korea unity” discourse

and the “complete Japan-Korea unity” discourse in colonial Korea. Morita Yoshio—a Japanese living in Korea at the time—has commented that the “harmonious Japan-Korea unity” discourse counted as the self-determination theory. Above all, since 1940 when Taiseiyokusankai was established, the boundary between politics and administration has been blurred.

Matsuda argues that the East Asian League members had no “political paradigm for Korean national liberation,” based on their denial of independence of Korea. Yet, they did not perform the “pure” independence movement but the East Asian League movement as this book also points out (p. 219). Whereas the Japanese police reckoned the “international harmony” that Koreans insisted as a gesture toward “independence,” Matsuda critiques it as no will for “independence.” However, “international harmony” indeed differs from “independence.” While pro-Japanese who sought wealth and social status pandered to men of power and on the other hand anticolonial activists fought against the Japanese police for independence, history was shaped somewhere between those two. When attending to an “impure subject” who have built the contemporary Korea, we should question which kind of subordination those subjects had to face (Hong 2011, 222), rather than asking whether their activities were for independence or subordination.

As for Korean members of the East Asian League, it would be more meaningful to examine the league’s postcolonial unfolding following the World War II, rather than assessing whether they were “anticolonial activists or converts” (p. 120). Among the Koreans living in Manchuria and sympathizing with the East Asian League (p. 18), Kwon Il became the chair of the Korean Residents Union in Japan in 1960s and became a member of the National Assembly after returning to Korea. Choe Kŭn’u, who once endorsed the Concordia Association (Kyōwakai) in Manchuria, served as head of general affairs of the Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence (Kōnjun). Pak Sōk’yun, the Manchurian consul in Poland, was one of the leading Korean elites of the time. Governor-General Minami reckoned Yō Unhyōng, Pak Sōk’yun, and Ishihara as the essentialists absolutely opposing the assimilation policy (p. 34). Apart from the latter two who were involved in the East Asian League, the fact that Yō Unhyōng, who negotiated with the Government-General regarding the self-determination issue during wartime, was temporarily entrusted with the administrative power on termination of colony, is very symbolic. Based on this political-historical continuity before and after 1945, in my previous work I

have argued that Korean intellectuals' discourse of conversion during the Sino-Japanese war was a "blueprint" for the postcolonial Korea (Hong 2009, 302).

The name of dominant subsequent organization of the East Asian League was "Harmony Party," which suggests the core spirit of the League was pursued continuously in post-war Japan. As for the movement by Koreans living in Japan, both of the General Association of Koreans Residents in Japan (Sōren) and the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan) opposes Japan's pressure to assimilate Koreans. Yet the latter's policy of coexistence and harmony in Japan leads to an intense *déjà vu*, in contrast to the former's principle of non-intervention with the consciousness of North Korean citizen oversea. The slogan of international harmony under the Emperor of Japan, which was ultimately rejected, returned as the international harmony under the democratic Japan following the World War II. It would have not been a mere coincidence that people associated with the East Asian League, such as Cho Yōngchu and Kwon Il, assumed the chair of the Korean Residents Union in Japan. I also would like to mention that the self-governing principle upheld by Pak Sōk'yun's Minsengdan in Manchuria and the slogan of self-determination for Koreans living in Manchuria incorporated into the guiding principle of Kim Ilsung's Chokuk kwangbokhoe, were embodied as the Korean autonomous prefecture in postwar China. Then, we feel compelled to consider the history and reality of Koreans living in Japan or China as the front line of colonial/postcolonial Korea.

I looked at the East Asian League focusing its phase of the project for the postcolonial order as a way of appreciating a new historical-hermeneutical horizon that Matsuda's study has opened up. I conclude this review with my respect for his work built on empirical research and flexible view.

## References

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